

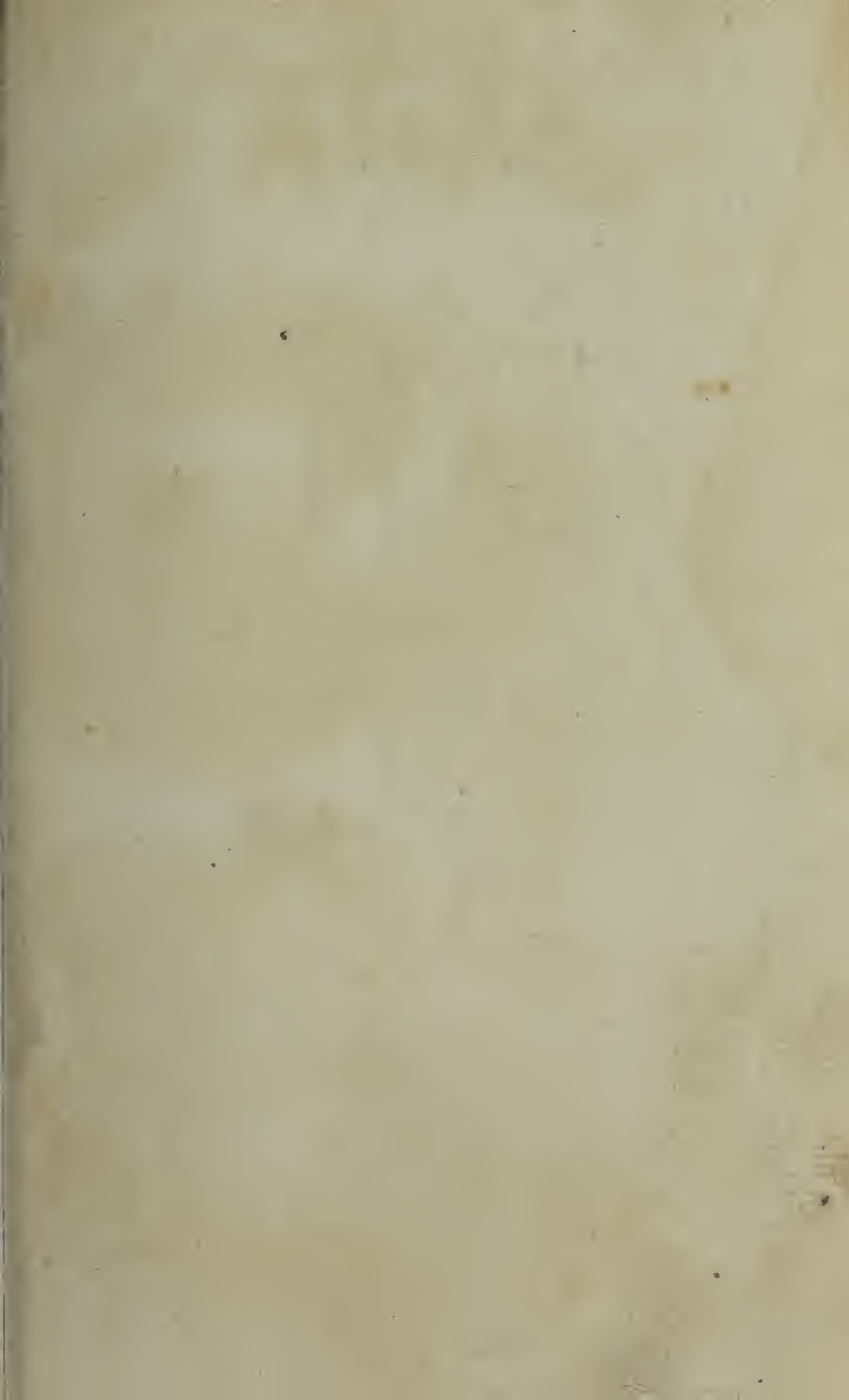


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IRISH 1798 COLLECTION









# BELFAST POLITICS:

OR,

A COLLECTION

OF THE DEBATES, RESOLUTIONS,

AND

*OTHER PROCEEDINGS OF THAT TOWN,*

IN THE YEARS

M,DCC,XCII, AND M,DCC,XCIII.

---

WITH

STRICTURES ON THE TEST

OF CERTAIN OF

*THE SOCIETIES OF UNITED IRISHMEN:*

ALSO,

THOUGHTS

ON

The British Constitution.

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HE KNOWS NOTHING OF MEN, WHO EXPECTS TO CONVINCE  
A DETERMINED PARTY MAN; AND HE, NOTHING OF THE  
WORLD, WHO DESPAIRS OF THE FINAL IMPARTIALITY OF  
THE PUBLIC. *Lavater.*

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BELFAST:

PRINTED BY H. JOY, AND CO.

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1794.

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THE  
FOLLOWING COLLECTION  
OF DEBATES AND RESOLUTIONS  
OF THE TOWN OF BELFAST,  
IS DEDICATED  
TO ALEXANDER HENRY HALIDAY,  
(M. D.)  
*A LOVER OF LIBERTY,*  
AND OF LETTERS:  
UNITING WIT, CHASTE AS BRILLIANT,  
WITH THE  
VIRTUES OF THE PATRIOT,  
*FRIEND,*  
AND  
" BELOVED PHYSICIAN."

1877

MEMORANDUM

TO THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR

FROM THE COMMISSIONER OF THE GENERAL LAND OFFICE

SUBJECT

REPORT OF THE COMMISSIONER OF THE GENERAL LAND OFFICE

ON

THE LANDS BELONGING TO THE UNITED STATES

IN THE TERRITORY OF ARIZONA

AND THE LANDS BELONGING TO THE STATE OF ARIZONA

AND

THE LANDS BELONGING TO THE INDIAN TRIBES

IN THE TERRITORY OF ARIZONA

AND

THE LANDS BELONGING TO THE INDIAN TRIBES



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## ERRATA.

Page 135.—*Date of Report of the Lord's Committees, omitted, viz. 7th March, 1793.*

—167.—*Twelfth line, third word, read ENGAGED.*

—174.—*Fourteenth line, fifth word, read IDIOTISM.*

—231.—*Fourth line, eighth word, read REVIVED.*

—255.—*Twenty-first line, first word, read STATUTE.*

—267.—*Ninth line, seventh word, read FORMED.*

—276.—*Last word, last line, read PASSED.*

—291.—*Nineteenth line, sixth word, read THE.*

—296.—*Lost line, ninth word, read PERSON.*

*In a note, page 174, mention was made of a third constitution having been framed for France; but it is apprehended that it was only a modification of the second one, which had been prepared by Barrere, Brissot, Condorcet, Danton, Genonne, Petion, Sieyes, Thomas Paine, and Vergniaud.*

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## P R E F A C E.

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**T**HE distinguished part, which Belfast has always taken in Irish Politics, especially since the beginning of SEVENTEEN HUNDRED AND NINETY TWO, with the applause and condemnation which it has drawn from different parties, suggested the idea of the following collection.

IT occurred to the compiler that a faithful report of the proceedings of that town, and the sentiments of those who took a lead in the controversies by which it was agitated, might prove a valuable record. He conceived, that an impartial collection of this kind must be acceptable to all parties; and even indulged the hope that such a review would tend to heal, rather than irritate the wounds, which public intercourse or private friendship might have received during the contest: At all events, he thought it should induce the inhabitants of a town, long conspicuous for harmony, to make a liberal allowance for diversity of sentiment in future, and to hold the right of private judgment as sacred in others as in themselves. To them, it must

afford sensible pleasure, and useful entertainment, to contemplate the progress of measures in which they were, individually and collectively, so deeply engaged. Strangers, who concurred with either of the parties in this controversy, will be gratified by a detail of transactions, debates, and disquisitions, which may have escaped their notice, or eluded their search ; as well as of some papers, that are now, for the first time, presented to the eye of the public. Those who condemned them all, may learn to think more favourably of their intentions and exertions. The advocates for the MAJORITY, will triumph in the immediate success of its operations. The partisans of the MINORITY, will lament by anticipation the eventual consequences of premature and precipitate measures ; and find consolation in applauding the sagacity, with which they foresaw the degradation of the town, and the delusion of the kingdom : while the dispassionate philosopher and practical politician may trace the progress of popular ardour, and the operation of those minute springs which often produce the most important movements, in the political machine.

WITH these views was the compilation undertaken. Of the execution, it is hoped, no party or individual will have reason to complain ; for no authentic source of information has been intentionally neglected.

THE DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS OF TOWN MEETINGS, RESOLUTIONS OF NUMEROUS SOCIETIES, AND SOME OTHER PAPERS, arranged nearly according to their dates, occupy the first division of the publication.



THE second consists of POLITICAL ESSAYS, controversial and didactic; of these, the arguments relative to the TEST taken by some of the UNITED IRISHMEN, are first in order of time. They are inserted on account of the extraordinary effect, which that engagement was supposed to have produced on the deliberations of the societies, and ultimately of the town.

THESE are followed by a series of papers, entitled, THOUGHTS ON THE BRITISH CONSTITUTION. This publication was occasioned by an apprehension, that some fanciful and dangerous opinions were gaining ground among the multitude. The splendid success of the French Revolution, the popular nature of its principles, and the imperfect state of our representation, had excited serious apprehensions that the affections of the people would be alienated from the form of the government under which we live. Struck with this apprehension, the writer of the first Number submitted it to the inspection of a Friend, who proposed, that it should be made the introductory paper of a series, and recommended *Thoughts on the British Constitution*, as a title that implied neither systematical composition nor methodical arrangement. The papers were accordingly composed and published, in such order as the changes of the public mind or the occurrences of the day required, and with such haste as the occupations of the writers rendered indispensable. The order has since been changed and some considerable additions made, particularly in Numbers VII. XIII. XIV. XVI. and XX. The succinct view exhibited in the ninth, tenth, and eleventh Numbers, of the

several plans which, at different periods, have been proposed for a reform in the representation of the people in parliament, will be prized as the first and only collection of the kind, by all sincere friends of the measure. It was intended to subjoin the letters between PORTIA AND MR. JONES, as calculated to throw light on a curious circumstance in history; but from the present size of the volume, they are necessarily omitted.

NOTWITHSTANDING the number of these sheets, it is to be apprehended that no party has been convinced; and that any apparent change in the temper of the town has been occasioned by circumstances very different from dispassionate reflection, or conclusive argument.

THE few who uniformly incline to the court, were for a considerable time compelled to give way to the popular torrent. They either maintained a prudent silence, or concurred with that party whose views appeared to be most moderate. Of late they have been more at liberty to avow their former opinions, being supported by the presence of a military force, and encouraged by the visible promptitude of the army.

THE party who were lately predominant, and exerted their influence with that degree of moderation and decorum, which is to be expected from a triumphant faction, plume themselves on having been materially instrumental in effecting a change of popular opinions and political measures, in behalf of the Roman Catholics. They are persuaded, that this was occasioned by the Societies of united Irish-men in Belfast and Dublin, without whose alliance the

Roman Catholics would have been treated in the manner recommended by the corporation of the metropolis, and the Grand Juries of the Kingdom.

IN answer to the objections which have been made to the nature and proceedings of these associations, they maintain, that in a country where the voice of the people is often disregarded, public opinion seldom consulted, and every thing carried either by the strong hand of power, or by the silent influence of the court, no signal advantage can possibly be obtained by ordinary means :---That this circumstance warranted the extraordinary measure of establishing CLUBS, which formed a chain of correspondence, concentrated the popular strength, and demonstrated the possibility of bringing it into action :---That the violence of the means, was vindicated by the importance of the end ; and the wisdom of the plan, evinced by its success. What has been accomplished they look upon as a considerable step, not only to the entire emancipation of the Roman Catholics from every remaining restriction, but to a radical reform in parliament ; for such, say they, must be the consequence of that permanent cordiality, which they expect will subsist between the allied powers, and that spirit of liberty which they confidently look for among the great body of their new friends. The Catholics will labour incessantly to effect a further renovation of the constitution ; as all they have attained can be of little avail, while the boroughs which return two thirds of the commons, are the exclusive monopoly of the aristocracy in both houses. Their

own interest therefore will secure their co-operation, and success will be certain. They allege that the almost instantaneous change that took place in the minds of protestants, from intolerance to amity, proved the wisdom of the measures pursued, and the folly of that shallow system of enfranchisement, from time to time, which the opposing party so zealously contended for.---Acting on the most enlarged principle, and directed by the eternal rule of right, they would have blushed to demand liberty for themselves, while they denied it to others. Had they condescended to the weakness and fears of some of their townsmen, or followed the advice of timid friends, emancipation would never have come round; and the true advocates of the measure had no alternative, but to carry it by a sort of *Coup de Main*, as they did, or to lose both it and reform, for ever. The success of the violent measures lately adopted by government, they ascribe to the supineness of the nation the timidity of some, the bigotry of others, and the prevalence of aristocratic ideas in the higher orders of society. For their part, let the consequence be what it will, they scorn to make any compromise with bigotry and injustice; or to subject the Rights of Man to any temporizing modification.

THOSE, who attempted in vain during the period treated of in this volume, to stem the tide of popular precipitation, are equally tenacious of their ancient notions; and as little disposed as formerly, to approve of the proceedings which they opposed. They draw a gloomy picture of the state of public affairs, and particularly of

the condition of this town. They represent the country as having been reduced to servitude. They describe the place of their nativity as having been subjected to martial law ; the emporium of commerce, become a military station ; the inhabitants insulted and put to the sword in the streets, and the whole kingdom looking on with acquiescence : and then they exclaim---Do our demagogues ever ask themselves how it came to pass that they were so deserted by their countrymen ? that a land which for ten years past has been unanimously anxious for liberty, and particularly for a parliamentary reform, should muster but five counties at Dungannon, and that these counties should be viewed with suspicion by the rest of the kingdom ; that parliament should be unanimous, or nearly so, in passing the gunpowder and delegation acts, in suppressing the volunteers, in approving of the proceedings of the Lord's committees, such as private interrogatories, discretionary imprisonment, and unlimited fines imposed by an extrajudicial sentence ? Do they ever enquire how government could venture upon such measures at the eve of a war, and continue them after its commencement ?

THEY insist that this cannot be owing solely to a daring or arbitrary spirit in government, to venality in parliament, nor yet to an artful management of popular prejudice ; BECAUSE government is the same, parliament the same, and the people the same. Nay, it is our boast that our people are better, more enlightened, more united, and more liberal. How then, they say, does all this happen ?



THEY themselves, charge it upon three principles.

THE FIRST is an affectation of secrecy and mystery, with a design of producing alarm ; which, pervaded the measures of the United Irishmen, and afterwards infected the whole party. They contend that secret cabals are unconstitutional and unmanly, unfit for a free country or for free men ; that no wise and good citizen will countenance societies whose members are unknown, whose proceedings are secret, or whose designs and principles are concealed ; that bad citizens will always endeavour to render them objects of jealousy ; and that from this jealousy government will gain invincible strength. 'Tho' in some subjects obscurity may be a source of the sublime, in politics it is only a source of jealousy and distrust.

THE SECOND is an imitation of republican principles and language, accompanied with extravagant demands and menaces, published with a view to intimidation. This conduct alarmed all men of title, rank, and hereditary fortune, dissolved the opposition in parliament, prompted timid men to cling about the castle, or wish for an union with Britain ; and inclined even some resolute and determined patriots to postpone a reform to calmer times. An attempt to intimidate, when not founded on power, they assert is equally mean and ineffectual. It is dishonorable in a gentleman to bluster when he can do nothing, to say more than he means, and to use threats which he is neither able nor willing to execute ; and it is ineffectual in a multitude to



endeavour to outwit their governnors. They should employ nothing but plain and public declarations, or active force. If the people be unanimous, this will succeed; if not, it is vain for clubs and juntos to think of inspiring government with any permanent alarm. They may occasion a temporary dismay, till their weakness is discovered; but the artifice will soon be detected. Government have a multitude of agents, both voluntary and mercenary, in every district, who can soon ascertain the strength of a party; but the inhabitants of a country, scattered as they are over the whole face of it, have no such means of information. Government therefore will soon recover from their surprise, and industriously avail themselves of the occasion, by diffusing a spirit of distrust and disunion among the people, that one of the parties may join their standard. They will promote dissension among the subjects, to encrease the influence of the crown. Thus on the present occasion, the wily minister of our sister country encouraged the Catholics when they were weak---then doubted of his ability to *perform* what he had given them reason to expect---advised them to apply to their own parliament---resisted their pretensions there---and at length brought all parties to depend upon Royal favour, as the only source of relief from domestic oppression. In this manner he carried off the glory of the measure, and insidiously endeavoured to attach the Catholics to the throne; dictated to parliament, and rendered the Cabinet of Saint James's a Court of appeal paramount to the legislature of Ireland.---This, (say they), is the present situation of affairs. Two knots of men

in Dublin and Belfast, have disgusted and frightened the only persons who could in any case obtain a reform in the ways of peace. They threw down the gauntlet. Government took it up. By their threatening language and warlike preparations, they seemed to say that they were able to obtain their demands by force. Administration knowing their imbecility, and feeling the additional strength it had acquired from such premature proceedings, said "Let us try.---There is a proclamation for you; insulting, and you will say, unconstitutional. "Is that enough?" All is quiet.---"Here is a gunpowder bill. Won't that provoke you?" "No." "We'll take your artillery. "You sha'n't assemble in arms: and the people who shall disperse your darling volunteers are the police, the odious police. Will nothing refuse you to put forth your boasted strength?" Even dragooning and military riots, in one part of this kingdom, were succeeded only by silent stupor and inaction.

THE THIRD error, was separating Catholic emancipation from general reform. Under this head, they loudly declare, that they were as hearty in the cause of liberality as their opponents. They were as well disposed to unite Irishmen; but they knew that Protestant prejudices must be conciliated, as well as Catholic. They wished for Catholic emancipation, but would have linked it with a system of general liberty. They wished to lead the people, in one phalanx, to demand a reform; and think that their force would then have been irresistible. As far as the feelings of Catholics are concerned, they re-

joice in the extension of franchise ; but as a national measure, their enfranchisement *without* a reform will be a calamity---It will drown the few good voters we can boast of, in a deluge of the meanest class of Catholic electors. WITH A REFORM, this extension of franchise would have benefited ALL parties. They should therefore have gone hand in hand. Had this been the case, the Catholics would have remained with the people. They will now, it is apprehended, strengthen the hands of government, encrease the expence and corruption of elections, and render many of the old patriots tenacious of the boroughs, as a bulwark of the Protestant interest. They insist that the Protestant and Catholic should have been bound together by the tie of a common interest, a partnership in oppression, and a joint hope of freedom, which neither could obtain without the other. This, they admit, would have required time ; but that they do not think a material objection. Being apprehensive of sudden shocks in the political machine, they profess themselves friends to gradual and deliberate measures. Incredulous with respect to sudden revolutions in popular or religious prejudices, they fear that the progress of liberality, or decay of bigotry, is not by any means as great or general as is pretended ; and that whatever views wise and enlightened men may take of the subject, three millions of people will not be easily excited to an opposition which some may consider dangerous to themselves, and others ungrateful to the court. A religious sect, whose dearest prejudices are in favor of Monarchy and Hierarchy, will scarcely prefer a combination either

with associations suspected of republicanism, or with professed presbyterians, to an alliance with the State, and with the Church of Ireland, which they may consider as a sect of popery ; since it acknowledges a human head, and professes to derive the efficacy of all its orders and ordinances, by apostolical succession thro' the Church of Rome.

THESE they assert to have been their ideas ; but finding the union of the clubs and the populace to be irresistible, and the advice or assistance of age, experience, approved integrity, and acknowledged abilities, rejected with disrespect, and being at the same time unwilling to obstruct so liberal a design, how much soever they deplored the mode of prosecuting it,---they very early withdrew their opposition ; and thus precluded the dominant party from saying, that their plans had been thwarted, or their projects marred.

THE present paralytic state of the nation, (they say) is, by no means, the least pernicious consequence of these violent and premature exertions : nor is it the least extraordinary of those symptoms, which indicate this malady, that two county elections in which Belfast had always acted an honourable part, should pass unnoticed : that with respect to the County of Down in particular, a member should be returned without a poll, while the inhabitants of Belfast were first certainly informed of the name of the candidate by his advertisement of thanks. The moderate party seem satisfied to submit to any imposition, rather than with a renewal of

old disputes, and give an opportunity to popular agitators to disseminate their principles. The more decided patriots not only talk of elections as matters of no importance in the present state of things, but even express a wish, that grievances may encrease, that they may be the sooner and more effectually redressed.---Against this sentiment I most earnestly protest. It is the part of a good patriot, never to despair of the country, but in every situation to act for the best; and he must be a bad citizen or a shallow observer, who wishes that our political lethargy should encrease with the hope of being roused by a French reform. Such a man admits no medium between slavery, and revolution; the loss of liberty, and the subversion of all government. Amid ten thousand chances of despotism and anarchy, there is scarcely one of rational freedom; and this after a series of atrocious factions.---While these parties argue thus, the partizans of the castle manage elections, as well as all other public business, at discretion.

SUCH are the views taken by both parties. It has been thought best to give them in the strongest language used by the partizan on either side, that the reader may perceive the force of their respective arguments, and be able to form an impartial judgment.

WE cannot here forbear to remark, that the censure so lavishly heaped on the town which gave rise to this publication---is indefensible. Granting that a majority of those inhabitants who of late attended public meetings, were considered by the government of the country as hav-

ing proceeded unwarrantable lengths---*twenty thousand* people are not therefore to be indiscriminately condemned. Of this we have sufficient proof, in the protest of two hundred and fifty five persons. Among them were enrolled by far the greater number of those whose patriotism, moderation, and decision, had long given dignity and consistency to the proceedings of Belfast. Under such circumstances, what plea in wisdom could be found, for pouring in bodies of troops out of all proportion to the magnitude of the town, and consequently so scattered over it as to be beyond controul. What necessity demanded an union of the functions of a General with those of the Civil Magistrate ; removing an useful barrier between the ardour natural to the standing army, and the cool deliberation requisite in the execution of the law ? In vain shall we search for an extenuation of the scenes of lawless violence which have so repeatedly occurred ; or an excuse for exhibiting to the world a picture of the majesty of the laws prostrated. ---THE LAWS, nothing should be suffered to trample upon with impunity, because their efficiency depends on public opinion ; and the popular idea of their being omnipotent, is necessary to their support.

THE civil power that should be superior on every occasion, seemed to sink under the exertion ; and our streets displayed the occasional anarchy of Paris in miniature. Common sense informs us, that troops to make a figure in the field abroad, must practice subordination at home : and history says that the Pretorian bands



of Rome, hastened the downfall of the Empire, and tyrannized over the very people that employed them.

BELFAST, by its consequence in the scale of Commerce, Manufactures, and Revenue, contributes eminently to the prosperity of the kingdom. It has paid near the rate of one hundred and twenty thousand a year in port duties alone, besides the incalculable share it otherwise takes in the general burthens of the state; and it has been said to have had a greater number of ships employed in *foreign* trade than all the rest of Ireland beside. Manufactures experience in it the fostering hand of the most assiduous culture. When credit was tottering to its base in almost every corner of Europe, here it held its ground. Its merchants blended prudence with enterprize, and reaped the reward of unsullied integrity. In acts of munificence, in charitable institutions, and private donations, none will deny its merit. During the period of near a century and an half, from the usurpation of Cromwell, it was signalized as much for loyalty to its Prince and attachment to his government, as by zeal in the pursuit of civil liberty. When our governors within these sixteen years dreaded a French invasion, and the Lord Lieutenant's secretary informed us, that government could only spare to the rich northern coast, the nominal protection of "a troop or two of horse, or "*part of a company of invalids,*" Belfast pressed forward in defence of the country. It was

seen in arms, from the earliest dawn of that auspicious æra, which opened with the enlargement of our trade, and closed with an acknowledgment of our national independence.

WITH what precious care such a character should be preserved, and what lenity and protection those who possess it have a right to expect---need no illustration. Persecution in politics, as well as religion, is absurd. It rivets error, while it vainly attempts to check the progress of truth: But a mild administration of government disarms the violent, and confirms the zeal and influence of its friends. When we imagine we are forging fetters for human thought, we open new regions to its flight, enlarge the sphere of its action, and excite energies that were latent before.

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WE venture to pronounce, that valuable maxims in politics are to be drawn from the whole of these proceedings. They shew that there is danger of promoting general disaffection to the form of our government, if those who administer it practise a system of profligate expence, break thro' the best mounds of the constitution, and oppose every attempt at moderate reform. The alarm occasioned by the late exertions of a single town, and by the spirit which was diffusing itself over a respectable province, may satisfy rulers that tranquility cannot be relied on, unless the will of the people be regarded, their complaints attended to, and their affections preserved. That the town which led the van, ad-



vanced too far beyond the main body, is sufficiently obvious. To that circumstance perhaps it is owing, that it failed in effecting still more important changes in national measures. But here, Ministers had little reason to boast. The people have a fund of unredressed grievances to reflect upon, and a spirit of discontent is consequently fostered in the most temperate bosoms. This may not always confine itself to the Northern Counties, but ultimately infect the thirty two.

ADMINISTRATION may then, have a chance of maintaining its authority, by the insidious policy of *dividing* the popular force : but how much more easily and more honorably might the same effect be produced, by *uniting* it? The worst governments should for their own safety rectify abuses that may in time undermine them, as a good one will encourage the natural tendencies of the constitution to renovate itself. The errors of France, as a beacon, point out the danger of *universal suffrage* ; but instead of deterring government from a rational improvement in the representative branch of our legislature, they should stimulate them to grant, and the subjects to expect it. Had the Ministers of France made their appeal to the people in an earlier stage of the Monarchy, while the public mind was firmly attached, as ours is, to the Prince and to the form of his government, temperate measures would probably have been the result. That crisis was suffered to escape, and the consequences are to be deplored by every friend of liberty and order, in their own country and in the world.

ON the whole, it were to be wished that from these petty broils, both government and its subjects would learn to guard against more lamentable convulsions, by attending to the following advice of MACCHIAVEL. “ Let administration  
“ and the legislature study to render themselves  
“ so much beloved and respected by the people,  
“ that no party shall indulge a hope of disturbing them with success, or impunity : and  
“ let not a discontented faction be too confident,  
“ that the multitude, however disaffected, will  
“ support them in their enterprizes, or accompany them in their dangers.”---“ Imparino  
“ pertanto i principi a vivere in maniera, e farsi  
“ in modo riverire e amare, che niuno sperì  
“ potere ammazzandoli salvarsi ; e gli altri conoschino quanto quel pensiero sia vano che ci  
“ faccia confidare troppo che una moltitudine,  
“ ancora che malcontenta ne’ pericoli tuoi ti  
“ seguiti o ti accompagni.”

STORIE FIORENTINE, lib. 7.

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# DEBATES, RESOLUTIONS, ESSAYS, &c.

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*Declaration and Resolutions of the Society of United  
Irishmen of Dublin, adopted from those of Belfast.*

**I**N the present great æra of reform, when unjust governments are falling in every quarter of Europe ; when religious persecution is compelled to abjure her tyranny over conscience ; when the rights of men are ascertained in theory, and that theory substantiated by practice ; when antiquity can no longer defend absurd and oppressive forms against the common sense and common interests of mankind ; when all government is acknowledged to originate from the people, and to be so far only obligatory as it protects their rights and promotes their welfare ; we think it our duty, as Irishmen, to come forward, and state what we feel to be our heavy grievance, and what we know to be its effectual remedy.

WE HAVE NO NATIONAL GOVERNMENT—— we are ruled by Englishmen, and the servants of Englishmen, whose object is the interest of another country, whose instrument is corruption, and whose strength is the weakness of Ireland ; and these men have the whole of the power and patronage of the country as means to seduce and subdue the honesty and the spirit of her representatives in the

legislature.—Such an extrinsic power, acting with uniform force in a direction too frequently opposite to the true line of our obvious interests, can be resisted with effect solely by unanimity, decision and spirit in the people,—qualities which may be exerted most legally, constitutionally and efficaciously, by that great measure essential to the prosperity and freedom of Ireland—AN EQUAL REPRESENTATION OF ALL THE PEOPLE IN PARLIAMENT.

WE do not here mention as grievances, the rejection of a place-bill,—of a pension bill,—of a responsibility-bill,—the sale of peerages in one house, the corruption publicly avowed in the other,—nor the notorious infamy of borough traffic between both ;—not that we are insensible of their enormity, but that we consider them as but symptoms of that mortal disease which corrodes the vitals of our constitution, and leaves to the people, in their own government, but the shadow of a name.

IMPRESSED with these sentiments, we have agreed to form an association, to be called THE SOCIETY OF UNITED IRISHMEN: and we do pledge ourselves to our country, and mutually to each other, that we will steadily support, and endeavour by all due means to carry into effect the following resolutions:

I. RESOLVED, That the weight of English influence in the government of this country is so great, as to require a cordial union among ALL THE PEOPLE OF IRELAND, to maintain that balance which is essential to the preservation of our liberties and the extension of our commerce.

II. THAT the sole constitutional mode by which this influence can be opposed, is by a complete and radical reform of the representation of the people in parliament.

III. THAT no reform is practicable, efficacious, or just, which shall not include Irishmen of every religious persuasion.

SATISFIED, as we are, that the intestine divisions among Irishmen have too often given encouragement and impunity to profligate, audacious and corrupt administrations, in measures which, but for these divisions, they durst not have attempted; we submit our resolutions to the nation as the basis of our political faith.

WE have gone to what we conceive to be the root of the evil; we have stated what we conceive to be the remedy. With a parliament thus reformed, every thing is easy; without it, nothing can be done: And we do call on and most earnestly exhort our countrymen in general to follow our example, and to form similar societies in every quarter of the kingdom, for the promotion of constitutional knowledge, the abolition of bigotry in religion and politics, and the equal distribution of the rights of man through all sects and denominations of Irishmen. The people, when thus collected, will feel their own weight, and secure that power which theory has already admitted as their portion, and to which, if they be not aroused by their present provocations to vindicate it, they deserve to forfeit their pretensions FOR EVER!

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*To the principal inhabitants of the Town of Belfast.*

GENTLEMEN,

AS MEN, and as IRISHMEN, we have long lamented the degrading state of slavery and oppression in which the great majority of our countrymen, the ROMAN CATHOLICS, are held—nor have we lamented it in silence—we wish to see all distinctions on account of religion abolished—all narrow, partial maxims of policy done away. We anxiously wish to see the day when every IRISHMAN shall be a citizen—when Catholics and Protestants, equally interested in their Country's welfare, possessing equal freedom and equal privileges, shall be cordially UNITED, and shall learn to look upon each other as brethren, the children of the same God, the

natives of the same land—and when the only strife amongst them shall be—who shall serve their country best. These, gentlemen, are our sentiments, and these we are convinced are yours.

WE, therefore, request a general meeting of the principal inhabitants at the town-house, on Saturday next, at noon, to consider of the propriety of a Petition to Parliament, in favour of our Roman Catholic Brethren.

We are, Gentlemen,  
your most obedient Servants,

Robert Thompson	Thos. Neilson	Robert Getty
Thomas Sinclair	Thos. M'Donnell	James Hyndman
Robert Simms	Robert Hunter	Robert Major
Gil. M'Ilveen, jun.	Thos. M'Cabe	Walter Crawford
Thomas Milliken	Wm. Martin	Sam. M'Murray
Samuel Neilson	Jas. M'Cormick	Thos. Brown
Samuel M'Tier	James Luke	John Bankhead
Hu. M'Ilwain	James M'Kain	Isaac Patton
Wm. M'Cleery	Ham. Thompson	J. Campbel White
Wm. Tennent	Hu. Johnson	J. S. Ferguson
Wm. Magee	Christ. Strong	John Todd
Wm. Simms	George Wells	Richd. M'Clelland
Robert Callwell	James Stephenfon	John M'Connell
Hu. Montgomery	Sam. M'Clean	John M'Clean
John M'Donnell	John Graham	And. M'Clean
Henry Haslett	Wm. Bryson	Thos. Ash
David Bigger	John Tisdall	John Caldwell
John Haslett	Hugh Crawford	

AT a Meeting of the BELFAST READING SOCIETY, January 27, 1792, the following resolutions were unanimously agreed to :

I. RESOLVED, That civil and religious liberty is the birth-right of every human being ; that Governments were formed to secure them in the possession of this right, and that states should be regulated so as to protect them in the exercise of it.

II. THAT doctrines of faith, and modes of worship can neither give nor take away the rights of men ; because opinion is not the object of govern-



ment; because the mode of expressing religious worship should be left to the judgment of God, and the decision of conscience; and because persecution, however it be disguised, is destructive of the equality of men, and the most sacred laws of nature.

III. That while we rejoice with every virtuous and enlightened mind, at the rapid progress which these principles have lately made, and the illustrious events to which their happy influence have given birth—events, which are the proudest boast of human nature, and which will supply history with ornaments unknown to former ages;—it is with inexpressible regret that we behold their circumscribed operation in this our native land.

IV. THAT Ireland can never deserve the name of a free state, while a great majority of her inhabitants enjoy the rights of citizens in so partial a manner; while they are totally governed by the will of others; in a word, while they are unjustly excluded from all share in the making and the administration of the laws under which they live.

V. In fine, it is our most fervent wish, that the nation would call for their deliverance, with a voice so temperate as to excite no tumult, so affectionate as to conciliate the hearts of all, but so UNITED, and so POWERFUL as to carry conviction to every source of legislation.

RESOLVED, That the above resolutions be published in the Belfast Papers.

JAMES M'CORMICK, CHAIRMAN.

## BELFAST MEETING, ON THE ROMAN CATHOLIC QUESTION.

JANUARY 28. 1792.

IN consequence of a requisition, signed by fifty-three inhabitants, for a meeting of this town, to consider of the propriety of a Petition to Parliament,

IN BEHALF OF THE ROMAN CATHOLICS OF IRELAND—the greatest assembly was held this day that we ever recollect here, if we except the Celebration of the French Revolution, on the 14th of July last. As the numbers that appeared could not be accommodated in the Town-house, an adjournment took place from thence to the New Meeting-House, the galleries and ground floor of which, tho' very extensive, were much crouded.

THE REVD. SINCLARE KELBURN was called unanimously to the chair, in which situation he presided with the utmost propriety; and, by a knowledge of the rules observed in all regulated popular assemblies, he procured perfect order and regularity.

MR. JOHN HOLMES, after a prefatory speech in favour of a liberation of the Roman Catholics, from the impolitic and ruinous system of penal laws, and from their other incapacities, moved for the appointment of a Special Committee, in order to draw up such a Petition to Parliament as would probably produce an unanimous vote, and unite the whole inhabitants of this town in one general supplication in behalf of their brethren of the Catholic persuasion;---and further, that it should be an instruction to that Committee to make the following words THE PRAYER of the Petition---the preamble and body of the Petition to be modelled according to the spirit and meaning of the Prayer:

“ WE therefore pray, that the Legislature may  
 “ be pleased to repeal, *from time to time, and as*  
 “ *speedily as the circumstances of the country, and*  
 “ *the general welfare of the whole kingdom will*  
 “ *permit,\** all PENAL and RESTRICTIVE statutes at  
 “ present in existence against the Roman Catholics  
 “ of Ireland; and that they may THUS be restored  
 “ to the rank and consequence of Citizens, *in every*  
 “ *particular.*”

\* That part of the prayer marked in *Italics*, shews what was afterwards expunged by a majority.



WHICH motion was seconded by Dr. HALIDAY ; but the first clause of it, for the appointment of a Committee, was afterwards dropt.

DOCTOR WHITE asked, if it was meant by the mover, to extend all privileges to Roman Catholics, as the paper just read seemed to be in some degree doubtful, from the manner in which it was worded, on that point.

AFTER some debate, the mover explained, that the repeal of the "RESTRICTIVE statutes" was meant to apply to *every* species of present legal disabilities, even to that which deprives them of the elective and other franchises, inclusive ;—these disabilities to be done away, not instantaneously, but gradually, from time to time, as the circumstances of the country may warrant.

MR. ROBERT THOMSON, in a deliberate and well-connected speech, fraught with that sound knowledge and cool disquisition which distinguish him as a speaker, opposed the words of the motion.——He expressed the very great regard he had for the respectable gentlemen who made and seconded the motion, and his regret in differing from either. He said his mind had been long made up on the present question. It was one to which he had paid considerable attention, and he was clearly of opinion that the Catholic body ought to be restored fully to all the rights of citizens—but as he knew several gentlemen differed from him, and as it had always been his anxious wish to preserve unanimity in the town, and as he thought an application on the present subject would come with more weight if agreed to without a dissenting voice ; he had taken the liberty to draw up a short petition, which he hoped would embrace the idea of every man in the house ; and he hoped the gentleman who hesitated about granting *all* their *rights* to Catholics at once, would see that he had conceded considerably, in order to take away every ground of objection ; with their leave he would read it.

*To the Right Honourable and Honourable, &c.*  
The Humble Petition of, &c.

SHEWETH,

“ THAT Petitioners have long lamented the state of degradation and slavery in which the great majorities of their countrymen, the Roman Catholics are held, by a multitude of laws, creating incapacities and inflicting penalties numerous and severe.

“ THAT Petitioners conceive it not only unjust in its principle, but in its operation highly injurious to the trade, commerce and industry, and to the general prosperity of Ireland, that the great body of the people should longer continue to be thus aggrieved.

“ PETITIONERS, therefore humbly pray that this Honourable House may take into serious consideration the case of the Roman Catholics, and grant them relief.”

AFTER many compliments to the Roman Catholics, and endeavouring to prove that they deserved and were capable of enjoying the blessings of liberty, as persons of their persuasion were those who obtained Magna Charta, and who obliged James, when in this kingdom, to give the royal assent to several bills of the first importance to the Constitution of Ireland—he entered into a particular enumeration of the grievances of this long insulted nation. He shewed the indispensable necessity of an immediate reform in a house of nominal representatives, in which the voice of the people was seldom heard, and seldomer attended to. A house held under English influence; returned by venal boroughs, and no longer expressive of, or governed by, the *public will*. That measures, replete with every good to the land which it should represent, were daily proposed to it, and as often scouted in disdain;—that the just wishes of the people were treated with contempt—and that without *an union of its inhabitants* no reform need ever be proposed, as none

without it ever could be effected. He here seemed to glance at the several instances in the last and former sessions, of rejecting almost every good bill offered by the few who can be said to have actually constituents in our House of Commons. The refusal of a *place, pension, and responsibility* bill; the refusal of an enquiry into the sale of the peerage, and the purchase of seats in another house with the money which bought these honours; the refusal of every bill for amending *the representation*; and, in short, of every other which had for its object the regeneration of the constitution, now become, thro' the lapse of time, mutilated, infirm, and calculated by the corruption of the best principles to sap the vital spirit of free government. After inveighing with much and deserved severity against the vile trade of rotten boroughs, he remarked that even the virtue of Ireland in 1782, with an armed host at its back, might not have effected what was called *a free constitution*; without the very support of those borough mongers who enslave the land, and who added their force to that of the people, for the mere purpose of enhancing the value of their seats, which they buy and sell like any article of commerce. He entered largely into a detail of the deceptions practised by government to disunite the kingdom; to separate the Protestant from the Catholic; the Catholic from the Protestant Dissenter, whose religious principles it is well known are at least *as* tolerant as those of any other sect, and whose political ones are those which have repeatedly drawn a worn-out constitution back to its first principles, particularly at the Revolution; shortly prior to which the sun of liberty had set apparently to rise no more. He told the assembly that it was a fact which had fallen within his own knowledge eight years ago, about the time of the volunteer convention, that for near a century past, when the Roman Catholics (then weighed down with the vilest restrictions, since in a considera-

ble degree done away) applied to government for redress, that the common reply was an expression of willingness to grant them relief ; but that no petition could be preferred in their behalf from the South, which would not be answered from the North ; and that nothing could be conceded to their wishes by the governing powers without producing a general weakness of the kingdom, by risings or rebellions among the Presbyterians of the North. That this delusive trick was now past, and that we should therefore come forward and form an alliance of power and a community of interest with our Catholic brethren ; as a concession to justice, and as the certain mean of effecting every good purpose which, without them, we have long sought for in vain. He concluded an address which the Editor regrets his not being able to follow thro' all its parts, by moving an expungement of the words affecting *the time* of the repeal of every penal and every restrictive statute ; in order to declare a wish that the restoration of all the rights of Roman Catholics should be IMMEDIATE and UNLIMITED. With much emphasis he asked, to whom were we to submit the point of *from time to time*, when the Catholics were to be liberated ? Was it to Lord Lieutenants and their Secretaries ? Was it to Parliament, in which the voice of the people was raised in vain ?—After a variety of arguments, in which he drew too just a picture of the wretched state of this country, in consequence of our being totally deprived of an adequate representation, founded on innumerable instances of our being governed by an English influence, his motion was made for the expunging of the following words in the prayer of the petition proposed by Mr. Holmes—" from time to time, and as " speedily as the circumstances of the country and " the general welfare of the whole kingdom will " permit."

DOCTOR WHITE said, it is now necessary to go more at large into the subject, as it appears we are not likely to agree without doing so.

IN discussing questions relative to constitutional government, it is necessary to lay down some principles, in which we shall all agree; to reason and draw conclusions from, and to take strict care that our conclusions or inferences may be legitimate: I therefore proceed to say that every man contributing by his ingenuity and industry to the well-being of any state, has a right to a voice in the government of his country; and as it would be impossible that each member of a state could be judiciously employed, as a legislator, that business must be transacted by delegation; he therefore is necessitated to unite with his district to chuse a representative.

IF so far I am right, we cannot avoid concluding that no member of any state contributing by his labour, his learning, or his ingenuity, to the support and well being of his country, can equitably be debarred from a share in the legislation of his country, personally, or by a representative.

WHOEVER is deprived of this right, is certainly a slave in a political point of view, and cannot be said to possess any control over, or defence against, laws, by which his life, liberty, and property may be abridged or taken away.

IF these opinions are founded, of which there is no doubt, it would seem extraordinary that a profession of any particular system of religion should be a sufficient pretext for exclusion from civil privileges; as if a conscientious discharge of a man's duty to God, (and conscientious must have been that of the Catholics, as it is in the teeth of their temporal interest,) was a fit cause of exclusion from civil rights. I should be rather inclined to believe that it was the strongest inducement to believe he was highly qualified for the exercise of civil virtues.

IT has been often alleged, and for a long time believed, that the profession of the Catholic religion,



and a belief in its doctrines, were incompatible with good citizenship; many instances to the contrary may be quoted in the history of our own country; to the Catholics we are obliged for trial by jury, for the institution of parliaments, our right of popular impeachment, and for Magna Charta; and our Catholic neighbours of France have given us a luminous view of their capacity in forming a government eminently calculated for the establishment and preservation of civil right and equal liberty.

HISTORICAL records supply us with innumerable facts, shewing in the clearest manner, that the profession of the Roman Catholic religion was by no means incompatible with the duties of a good legislator. A Roman Catholic Parliament, in the reign of Henry IV. 1399, thought it necessary to pass a particular act against the Pope's bull ratifying the statutes of Shrewsbury, because it was founded on a principle opposite to, and subversive of the rights of the people; it was therefore declared that the kingdom of England was independent of all foreign power, particularly of the court of Rome, and that the Pope had no right to interfere in the civil government of the realm.

ARE we not then to suppose that if such was the conduct of Catholics in such early uninformed stages of society, that the accumulated light and information of some countries, will have similar and equal effects in increasing their liberality and information, to what it has produced on their Protestant brethren.—Men of science and literature are numerous, very numerous of that religious persuasion; and the abilities and consequence of members engaged in every department of commerce are second to none of their country-men. Independent of a principle of justice, which must be allowed to be the leading feature in the business; our interest essentially demands it. I am well convinced that while Catholics are excluded from a share in legislation, that great desideratum, a parliamentary reform will

be fought for in vain ; is it likely that such partial application as can be made by the Protestants of Ireland, compared to the great body of the people, will be properly attended to ? certainly not ; but the united and determined voice of Ireland must be heard, and will be attended to, in such manner as an application of four millions deserve ; and, even in our present circumstances, if Catholics were allowed franchises on the same terms as Protestants, it would be attended with the most happy effects.

It is said they are more ignorant than the Protestants : of this I have doubts, in so far as elective franchise, similar to that which the Protestants enjoy, would operate ; and I must positively deny the conclusion, as I think upon the slightest consideration of the subject, the use and power of elective franchise, and the occasional intercourse with their fellow electors, and their representatives, with the feeling naturally arising from the rank and importance they hold in the state, will have a powerful and immediate effect in improving their understanding and giving them proper views of their civil rights.

BUT I would beg of the warmest opposer of the enfranchisement of Catholics to give me a rational and sincere reason, for the great body of the Catholics of Ireland, acting in opposition to the interest of the state.

THE Catholic religion is by no means so adverse to the use and improvements of the human understanding as to render it unfit for the management of the common occurrences of life ; on the contrary, the professors of that religion have rendered themselves highly conspicuous in every department of literature ; and I believe it may be allowed that they are nearly at the head of every science, and have been for a series of time. May we not then suppose that even in the redemption of forfeited estates, if such an absurdity could be conceived, they would pursue maxims of policy similar to those held out



by our Protestant delegates in their attempts to produce a parliamentary reform, viz. to recompence, or rather decidedly to purchase, corrupt boroughs from their patrons or proprietors of property (if I may be allowed the expression), unknown to our constitution and unknown to our laws; yet these reformers purposing to have as few obstructions as possible to an adequate parliamentary reform, were satisfied to sacrifice the national purse, to purchase the assent of venal citizens, certainly on the principle of its having for a number of years been supposed as private property.

You have hitherto exerted yourselves, and contributed to the present improved state of the constitution of your country, in the capacity of citizens and volunteers, and have frequently in your application to your governors, and in your appeal to your brethren, with your mouths prophaned the word *people*, by using their name when their will or opinion was not consulted: I conjure you then to look upon the men of Ireland, without respect to religious profession, as your brethren entitled to equal rights and privileges: then may you without profanation or inconsistency, use the word *people*, in its honest and comprehensive sense; and then may you boldly adopt what should be the sentiment of every good citizen—*Salus Populi Suprema Lex*.

He was followed by Dr. HALIDAY, a gentleman who has been looked up to in this place, for near half a century, with veneration and respect, as the steady assertor of the people's rights on every occasion; as one who ranks among the highest, as a professional man, and unites the profound scholar with the fine gentleman. He professed his early detestation of the penal code of laws, which was held as a scourge over the heads of our Catholic brethren—and many years back ardently wished to see them done away. But he would not grant that nothing *could* be obtained, without the co-operation of the Roman Catholics of Ireland—because, within his

memory, a great deal *had* been. He reverted to a period, perhaps antecedent to the recollection of any man in that assembly, except himself, the year 1753 ;—that year in which the latent spark of freedom in this country was fanned into a flame, that afterwards illuminated the whole kingdom, and turned its attention to its rights, after that long season of depression, which succeeded the ineffectual, tho' glorious efforts of the immortal MOLYNEUX. From that period he traced the progressive successes of public virtue, down thro' their several stages, to the present day. This space comprehended the rendering of our Parliaments octennial, in 1768, instead of depending for their termination on *the life of a King*, and consequently giving it the power of a tyranny for that undecided duration—the recovery of our right to freedom of trade in 1779— and the restoration of Ireland to imperial dignity in 1782, by establishing the independency of its crown and of its legislature.—That all *these*, and many subordinate measures, were effected *without* their interference ; and that, therefore, he could never grant that nothing *could* be effected without their aid ; as all we had gained was gained without their weight, in any one instance, being thrown into the scale. That he did not the less deplore the state of unjust degradation into which they had, in less enlightened times, been plunged ; and hoped for every just concession, as much as he should fear the effects of *immediate* and *perfect* emancipation, in a moment. He should regret that such an attempt were made before the time was ripe for it ; before the one great body was ready to grant, in an instant, or the other was prepared or qualified to receive.—That before that day could arrive, when the emancipation could in *every* respect be *complete*, much information should pervade the general mass, which at present its lowest classes were divested of. That the influence of the Priesthood over the minds of

the laity must be considerably reduced, before we could with truth say, that an extension, to all their body, of elective franchise, would encrease the virtual basis of election. That the lights of education, long withheld, should first diffuse among them their happy effects—teach them the independency of the human mind—and the nature, as well as the value, of those blessings which a free constitution can alone bestow. Till that period arrive, receiving as electors *the whole mass* of that uninstructed body, would be dangerous both to themselves and to us, and would not ultimately tend to the interests of either.

MR. ROBERT GETTY.—It seems the extension of the elective franchise to our Roman Catholic brethren, is the great objection to the prayer of the petition last read.

It should be remembered, that the law depriving them of this liberty, was made after the commencement of this century. That they enjoyed in as full an extent as the Protestants do now this right, for a series of time after the Revolution, without danger to the establishment; and that then their ignorance was not more noticed than that of the other subjects of the kingdom. But, Mr. Chairman, the fact is, we found them then equally enlightened as ourselves, and our penal laws have been the cause of that ignorance so much lamented, which actually has debased their nature, and by continuing them, we continue their ignorance. The power of their clergy has been much talked of, and it is what many liberal and good men much fear. It has been remarked by a celebrated writer, that where ever we find people profoundly ignorant, there the Ministers of their religion have over them a mighty influence; I therefore say, that you effect a most desirable reform in this particular, by dispelling that ignorance which will inevitably produce that effect; and no men at this moment in the state, are more averse to the relaxations spoken of, than the Priests, as they dread the decay of their own power, over the uninformed

minds of the present race of Roman Catholics. He said a few words more on the use of contested elections, which by bringing people together in numbers, have a tendency of increasing their knowledge of public affairs, by communication of sentiment; and this body of our countrymen in their present situation, have no opportunity of using such advantages.

MR. LE BLANC, (a tambour-worker) began by saying he was "a foreigner by birth, but a citizen of the world by principle," and delivered a very animated speech in favour of the amendment. He concluded with a declaration, that it appeared a little ridiculous to him, to see a town consisting of 20,000 inhabitants deliberating about granting rights to others, *who had no rights themselves.*

DOCTOR BRUCE said, he frequently had reason to regret, that the more immediate duties and avocations of life prevented his attending the meetings of this town as a citizen, or contributing the aid of an humble individual in matters of public moment as they arose.

BORN in a free country, nurtured in the earliest love and admiration of the principles of liberty, and inheriting equally by descent as by religious profession, a steady attachment to every human right; he should once have considered it impossible to find himself in the situation in which he stood there that day. To take that side which could on any question be construed into *the least* liberal, is a predicament that he should not have conceived any train of events could have placed him in. However, when he observed around him a number of the first characters in this town, professing sentiments similar to his own; many of those who had given dignity to its former deliberations; and whose names a long series of public virtue has taught the most distant parts of this kingdom to contemplate with veneration—he felt the highest consolation he could receive, after the approving testimony of his own mind.

WERE his sentiments (he said) respecting the Roman Catholics of Ireland generally known in this assembly. it were unnecessary to assert that their gradual admission to civil franchise, and an abolition of the many unjust and impolitic penal laws still in force against them, are not with him the transient subjects of a day, but had long had his most serious attention, and warmest approbation.—The experience of every year added confidence to his opinion, that this country without a coalition of its inhabitants, can never possess that consequence in the scale of empire to which its numbers should entitle it.

HE said, that when he heard, as of late he had often done, THE RIGHTS OF MAN pleaded in their *abstract* sense, as that line from which not the smallest deviation is in practice to be made; when he found them adduced as an argument for an instant transfer of power from one body of the people to another—despising every caution in the mode of granting it, and regardless of the past history of the country, its present condition, or the mixed genius of its inhabitants; he must essentially differ from men, the purity of whose *intentions* he might admire, but the precipitancy of whose measures he must regret.

DID the nature of so large a meeting admit a general and intimate acquaintance with ancient and modern republics, of the several states which have flourished in their turns at different periods of the world; he might, on the testimony of history, defy the advocates for such extravagant opinions to produce a single instance in which the mere abstract theory of rights, the perfect equality of men, were ever, in forming the basis of any government, strictly applied.

AMERICA, flushed with conquest, and rising triumphantly from the stroke of despotic power, without any thing to controul her deliberations on the



establishment of as perfect freedom as wisdom could devise—never suffered herself to be borne away by ingenious refinements, nor to lose the attainment of every practicable good, in the vain pursuit of ideal.

FRANCE, after tearing up her ancient government by its roots, destroying hereditary honors and reducing the lofty fabric of a long established hierarchy, never entertained the wish of moulding its new constitution on the rights of men in *the abstract*.—Had it done so, *persons*, not *property*, had been exclusively represented; but in the French constitution *property* as well as *persons*, is a basis of representation.

IF we follow, without restriction, *the theory* of human rights, where will it lead us? In its principle it requires the admission of *women*, of persons under age, and of paupers, to suffrage at elections; to places of office and trust, and as members of both Houses of Parliament.

HE found himself warranted, therefore, in saying, that, tho' actuated by as much philanthropy towards his Roman Catholic brethren as any other man, and possessing as sincere a wish for their emancipation—it was impossible for him to join in the wish to throw open to them in a moment the sources of power; without a dereliction of every principle of prudence and good sense. That portion of the Irish community being so much greater than the rest, a full extension of *the rights of man* would at one stroke, without any previous illumination of their minds by education, without any preparation on either side, transfer every power of government, from the most to the least tolerant, from the most to the least enlightened part of the state—from the Protestants to the Roman Catholics of Ireland. From their comparative numbers such would be the immediate effect; nor can any one, maintaining the abstract question of right, deny that this is an immediate result from the principle.

He said that no man would assert that the Roman Catholics (taking them in the aggregate) are in their present state as well informed, or as capable of holding the reins of government with wisdom and moderation, as the Protestants. The former from the nature of things, must feel restraint and ill humour in consequence of ancient prejudices, and continued oppression. These will require time to subside, and may be best removed by a gradual extension of immunities; which will at the same time have a doubly happy effect, by eradicating Protestant as well as Catholic prejudices, and preparing the one to grant freely from affection, what the other may then be better qualified to receive.

THAT great and immediate changes are not often desirable even in matters of less consequence. That to individuals in private life, they are seldom productive of happiness: to nations, they prove frequently ruinous.

THAT a moment's reflection might convince any man, that innumerable unforeseen and dangerous effects, leading to tumult and confusion, might be expected from a revolution of power so conducted. To enter into so wide a field would exceed the limited time of the meeting—He could not however avoid briefly touching on a point which had naturally led to much discussion—its possible consequences respecting the FORFEITED ESTATES in this country.

THE point of *right* in resuming those estates seems to be absolute: nor would there, supposing a complete transfer of power to the Roman Catholics, be any bar to it, except the right which *conquest* has given to the present proprietors; a kind of right now justly exploded and which would in the case alluded to be little respected.

THE treaty of Limerick cannot affect the right; for a single garrison could not capitulate for a whole kingdom, nor bind it for ever.—Laws and charters cannot invalidate it; because made by a small body, under direction from a foreign country, exer-



cising what would then be deemed usurped authority. Consider how these forfeitures were incurred.—In defending the country against foreign oppression, in Queen Elizabeth's reign ;—in the plantation of Ulster, by James the first ;—the grants of lands to Cromwell's Captains, which would be impeachable even on English *restoration* principles ;—the forfeitures under James the 2d, the lawful King of Ireland, fighting at the head of his people against a Dutchman, whose claim, even to the English Crown, was a disputed election—none at all to the *Irish* Crown, except the old law, that both countries should have the same King, which would scarcely apply, and would certainly be set aside, in case of a rupture with England. If such change of power came about without any tumult or hostilities, it is possible that still the higher orders might act from a principle of *right*, in claiming their estates ; the Priests, and the lower classes, from bigotry, pride of power and clanship. But as there must, in the course of such a revolution, necessarily be some irritation, perhaps exasperation, this would render a change of property, with a change of power, the more likely ;—if a considerable body of the Protestants of rank and fortune resisted the revolution, it might be looked on as *certain*. If titles could not be produced, but only a strong probability of ancient right could be made out, they might call on the present possessors to produce *their* titles ; the very production of which would establish, instead of weakening, the old claims, by reciting that the lands in question had been taken from such and such persons, for such and such causes, in the very act of defending the government and the religion of their ancestors.

WITH every desire to accelerate the day of the complete enfranchisement of the Roman Catholics of Ireland, but convinced, that in a matter of such immense magnitude, a *gradual and progressive* change is the most desirable (the only practicable

one) and equally the interest of ALL—he said he must support the address, as originally moved by Mr. Holmes, praying that the repeal may be “*from time to time, and as speedily as the circumstances of the country, and the welfare of the whole kingdom will permit.*”

CONSIDERING himself called upon as a moralist, a citizen, and a divine, he adverted, with irresistible force of argument, to the influence which he conceived a considerable part of the meeting might act under, in consequence of a test taken by them in the society of United Irishmen.—As this part of his speech has been the subject of some conversation, we should not, in a matter of nice discussion, think ourselves warranted in going into it without being able, very nearly, to follow *the words* of the Speaker: especially as this topic has since been fully discussed. [See Strictures on the Oath of the United Irishmen in this vol.]

MR. NEILSON said, he meant only to notice one point of the very long and extraneous speech they had just heard, namely, that which alluded to the Society of United Irishmen; a society of which he was proud to acknowledge himself a member. The learned gentleman had, he said, gone far out of his way indeed to attack that society and its test: but to what did this test go? to union and consequent reform. Can any advancement in knowledge, any change of circumstance, render union and reform improper? But the gentleman has refuted himself; he has attacked all tests, and yet the very first step taken by that assembly, which he has so properly styled enlightened, when they set about framing their constitution, was to take a test. While the gentleman speaks from misinformation, as it appears he has done on the present point, the societies are equally heedless of his praise as regardless of his censure.

DR. WHITE said, it was little to be expected that a gentleman from his earliest infancy, nurtured

and brought up with the most liberal ideas of civil and religious liberty, which he said he was proud to boast of, and at the same time a Minister of the Gospel, professing dissent from all subscriptions, creeds or confessions of faith, should yet incline to deny the exercise of the right of private judgment, in matters of religion, to brethren, without subjecting them to the penalties of civil incapacities. Such doctrines might have been expected from the ministers of a different church, whose abilities have often been prostituted in inculcating even from the pulpit the exploded doctrines of passive obedience and non-resistance, but that such opinions very ill become a Protestant Dissenting Minister, at the present enlightened æra.

MR. SAMUEL Mc. TIER said, that he thought the Society of United Irishmen, very improperly introduced : he had the honour of belonging to that body, had taken the test, but thought himself at liberty to vote as he pleased.

DR. M'DONNELL observed, that this should rather be considered as a *moral and religious*, than a political question. He had been connected both by the ties of friendship and of blood with several Roman Catholic gentlemen, both at home and abroad ; he could find nothing in their political or religious opinions to prevent their being good citizens : he had been accustomed from his earliest infancy to hear them flattered with the same language which the present *mild petition breathes* ; this has been the language of the Protestant people, of the Parliament, and of every printed book these forty years : " They were to be liberated from time to time."

HE observed that this was not the first period, in the history of mankind, where the same *game* had been played ; he adverted to the late proceedings in England, relative to the slave trade. The situation of the African was to be meliorated ; they would cease importing him from time to time, according to *expediency*. He called the attention of the assembly

to a most parallel example. When the Spaniards became masters of Cuba and Hispaniola, they *divided* the people as they did their *lands* and treasures among their officers. Some became possessed of 800, some of 1400 *head of people*.—The Dominican and Franciscan friars remonstrated against this mode of enslaving the Indians. They carried their remonstrance to the court of Spain, (a court milder at that time, and more alive to the feelings of humanity than our Parliament at present) their cause was pleaded before an august tribunal, witnesses were heard on both sides: they proceeded exactly as we are proceeding at this moment.—The question of right to liberty was admitted on the side of the Indian—the question of expediency appeared difficult; it was at length determined, “they should be liberated from time to time.” But that time has never arrived, nor can it now ever, for there is not at present one soul existing in either Cuba or Hispaniola. The race of Indians is extirpated—they were extirpated from time to time. Would to God therefore that you would not join with the language of a court in extending her blessings of freedom to your brethren by piece-meal; for what is freedom, but a jest and a farce, if its blessings are dispensed and received as the favour of kindness and humanity, instead of being considered as an inheritance and as a right!

MR. THOMSON.—Much has been said of the incapacity of those professing the Roman Catholic religion, for the enjoyment of freedom, but we seem to forget that the boldest features of the British constitution were procured by Roman Catholics, and that to a parliament of that persuasion we are indebted for a great outline of an Irish constitution.—You talk of referring it to the wisdom of Parliament, to grant them from time to time their rights; that is to say, the English Secretary (*pro tempore*) is to determine on that time and that extent which will be most for the interest of his master, (the English minister).

SIR, from my own knowledge, I say that it has been the practice of government, to hold up one persuasion as a bug-bear to the other, and thereby to refuse rights to either; it is high time the delusion should terminate, and that the Irish nation should unite and demand in a temperate but firm tone, those rights which are their inheritance.—And I ask, if thus united, and thus determined, *where is the power that dare refuse them?*

It has been said, Sir, that we have obtained many great points without the aid of the Catholics, and why may we not also obtain reform without that aid?—I answer, all that we have obtained have been to benefit the aristocracy, not the people. What have been the advantages of your free constitution, as it is called? why an advance in the price of boroughs: 3000*l.* instead of 1000*l.* for a seat; but how does the point stand with respect to the people: an encrease of taxes to bribe our own countrymen to oppress us, which was formerly done by the English *gratis*. In every step we took to obtain our trade and constitution, our own aristocracy and borough-mongers, (being chiefly interested) warmly supported us; but is it their interest to support us in reform?—do they not almost to a man warmly oppose us?—how then can one million of Irishmen obtain their rights, in opposition to Irish aristocracy,—to English influence—to three millions of their own countrymen. So far with respect to policy and expediency: but when we come to talk of right and justice, what will we say? shall we pretend equal representation, and exclude three fourths of our fellow subjects?—I say in such a case we *ought not* to succeed, and I further declare, that I would now lament it as one of the greatest misfortunes that could have befallen this country, had we succeeded in our limited and unjust notions of reform in 1783.

A GENTLEMAN has talked of Switzerland, and called it the region of liberty. I will ask that gentleman, are not Catholics and Protestants united in that



country ; and is not this an additional argument, if any were required, that there is nothing in the Catholic religion by any means inimical to civil liberty ?

He concluded by stating, that as the town of Belfast had no representative, and as the only share we had in representation of Ireland, was from a few of us being freeholders of the county of Antrim, where indeed we are faithfully represented, the petition must be sent to the Right Hon. J. O'Neill, in order to be by him presented to Parliament in the name of the town of Belfast.

IN the course of the debate, it was argued, that every member of a state, contributing by his ingenuity and industry to its well being, has a right to advise in its government ; and as it would be impossible that every inconsiderable member of it could be properly employed as a legislator, that that duty must be performed by delegation, and that he is therefore necessitated to unite with his district in the choice of a representative. That no person so contributing by his labour, his learning, or his ingenuity, to the support of his country, can be equitably debarred from a share in its legislation, either in person or by proxy ; especially as the laws so to be made must affect the life, liberty, and property of all. Considering these as fundamental principles, it seems extraordinary that the professing of any particular system of religion should be a sufficient pretext for exclusion from civil privileges. It has been often alleged, that the Catholic Religion, and a belief in its doctrines, were incompatible with good citizenship. How is this warranted by historical fact ? To Roman Catholics we are indebted for the trial by jury ; for the institution of parliaments ; the great charter of liberty ; and our Catholic neighbours have given us a luminous view of their capacity of forming a government eminently calculated to establish civil rights and equal liberty among men. A Roman Catholic Parliament in Henry the Fourth's time (1399) passed an act against



the Pope's bull, because it was subversive of the rights of the people. It was therefore declared, that England was independent of all foreign power, particularly of the Court of Rome. Are we not then to suppose, that if such was the conduct of Catholics in such ignorant stages of society, that the accumulated light of centuries shall have still more encreased their liberality and information?—That no partial application for a reform of Parliament can ever succeed; that the only effectual one must result from the *united* and determined voice of *the whole people of Ireland*,—no man can deny who takes a retrospect of a few years, and the treatment which the Protestant prayers of the people for reforms of every kind have experienced, and daily experience. It was further argued that by the concession of the elective suffrage to the Catholics, in the same degree as Protestants already enjoy it, an addition of 2 or 300,000 electors to the present number, would be attended with the happiest effects on the freedom of election, by enlarging the basis of it. In answer to those who are well inclined to their emancipation, but allege that at present it would be premature, on account of their want of *information* and knowledge, it was said that the most certain means of dispelling that ignorance, and rooting out the subjection which their priests would wish to keep them in, would be the exercise of elective franchise; which by giving them an intercourse with their fellow electors, and a communication of sentiment, would soon dispel the mist of ignorance, make them feel their own dignity, improve their understandings, and give them a relish for the enjoyment of every civil right.

THE history of elections convinces us that the 40 shilling freeholder is more under the undue influence of his landlord, than the menial servant is of his master; that therefore votes should be given to every description of people, as the best means of rendering bribery, corruption, and undue influence, impossible or of little avail.

THAT the argument respecting the recovery of *forfeited lands*, had little weight, considering the distant period when they were lost—few of them less than a century and an half back ; since which time they have passed from hand to hand, and many of them again become, by purchase, the property of Roman Catholics. That the Catholics themselves would perceive such insuperable obstacles to the success of these claims, that those descendants of the proprietors of forfeited estates, who could prove their title, would be *so few*, that the general body would never suffer them to be gone into ; in order to prevent confusion in the state, and the interruption of national tranquility, then become so much their interest to maintain. Let it be remembered what a small proportion the forfeited estates bear to the whole landed interest of Ireland—and it will be granted, that they do not deserve all the regard which is often paid to them, in considering the subject of this day's discussion. The difficulties in the way to a reversion of the forfeitures, are many and great ; among others, a bill for that purpose would have to be brought into Parliament—pass both houses—and receive the Royal assent.

#### ON THE OTHER HAND,

THE friends of the original motion professed as warm an attachment to their Roman Catholic fellow-subjects as the other side, and as ardent a wish for their complete emancipation ; but they thought, that this would be best effected *by degrees*.

THE expunging of the words *from time to time*, &c. had been supported on this principle, that the rights of man are indefeasible, and that they cannot rightfully be withheld even for a moment.—This was admitted, but still it was contended, that no Government had ever been constituted upon *the strict theory* of these principles ;—that the French legislators themselves had thought it necessary to restrict the right of suffrage ; and that when a country had fallen into the present circumstances of Ireland, it must extricate itself from them by degrees. That

all sudden reverses of fortune are dangerous to the virtue or moderation of the wisest *individual*, and still more so to that of a multitude—circumstanced like the Irish Catholics.

THAT the Roman Catholics of this country are not, in their present state, as well informed or as capable of exercising government as the Protestants.

THAT the Roman Catholics must feel resentment and ill humour in consequence of ancient injuries, recent insults, and continued oppression.

THAT these will require time to subside, and will be best removed by a *gradual* extension of immunities and privileges ; which at the same time would have another happy effect, in gradually eradicating prejudices from the minds of Protestants, and preparing them to grant what the others are willing to receive.

THAT the Roman Catholics having formerly lost their possessions, fighting for the liberty of their country, against a foreign power, must think that they have a right to resume them when they can, and to abrogate any laws passed during what they consider as an usurpation, that may stand in their way. That on the principle of immediate liberation, and *unlimited* communication of *the rights of man*, this would be in their power ;—and that a moderate exercise of absolute power in such circumstances, could not be expected even from the most enlightened people.

THAT that the mass of the Catholics are subject to the influence of their priests in an undue degree ; and that under their direction the lower orders would, in case of a sudden revolution, compel their more enlightened superiors to yield to their desires ; and among other alterations, to restore their hierarchy to its former splendour and power, as the established religion of the land.

THAT for these reasons, though they longed for *an entire* abolition of invidious and oppressive distinctions, for the general exercise of *every franchise*,

they could not vote for the accomplishment of this object, otherwise than from time to time—commencing at present with some essential concessions, and progressively encreasing, as the circumstances of the country and the welfare of the whole kingdom would permit.

THAT those who insist on the propriety of admitting every denomination of men to elective suffrage, on the principle that *persons* not *property* should be represented, and that it should go to the admission of menial servants, or, according to the Duke of Richmond's plan, even to *paupers* themselves—should recollect, that the most enlightened assembly the world ever saw, the French constituting assembly, with every due attention to the rights of man, made *property* one of the bases of elective franchise.—*Unanimity*, as far as it could be effected without a violation of *principle*, was ardently recommended.—That as the whole assembly appeared to be of one mind touching *the general principle*, it was for the interest of the Roman Catholic cause that Belfast should come to such a decision that day as would embrace every liberal man's ideas in its favour.—That many of the most respectable members of the town; of those whose names were long known as the encouragers of every principle of freedom, civil and religious, could not go the whole length of the prayer of the petition, were it to declare a wish that the emancipation should be *instantaneous* and *universal*. That the advice of a prudent Catholic divine, whatever his dignity in that church, from the Curate of Belfast, to the Titular Primate of Ireland—would be—"let our friends of the North beware of dividing a town of such consequence, of such liberality as this one. Let them remember that every declaration in our favour is a point gained; and must eventually lead to matters of higher consequence.—That generous sentiments unanimously declared by such a body, will do more to banish prejudice on both sides, than the most forcible resolution carried

against a respectable minority. That the repeal of a great part of the penal code was the offspring of the divine spirit of toleration exemplified at the volunteer assembly in Dungannon, in 1782; that had more been then attempted, less perhaps had been obtained; that we have since that period experienced the decay of more religious prejudice than any equal portion of the history of man can find a parallel to.—That there is a natural progress in human affairs, a slight attention must convince every man; and that, as one favourable step is the parent of another, in gradual measures we have the best chance for success."

HAVING now gone thro' most of the arguments which we at present can recollect, with some trifling additions, for the purpose of connection, we shall conclude by mentioning the issue of the day's proceedings—and reminding our readers, inhabitants of Belfast, of the salutary advice which fell with so much propriety from a divine of the Protestant Dissenting Church (*Dr. Bruce*): that we were met on a glorious principle, the relief of our Catholic brethren; that every allowance should be made for the unavoidable shades of difference, which in a question of such magnitude must occur between the most enlightened minds;—that being all of one opinion regarding the general subject, it was our duty to preserve the most perfect harmony, let the issue of the day's business be what it may; and that any asperity which the ardour of debate may possibly induce, should be forgotten with the moment.

THE question *for expunging* was then put, and carried by a very considerable majority.

THE petition, as amended, and forwarded to Mr. O'Neill for presentation, is annexed.

A motion was made by Mr. Joy, that the resolution which succeeds the petition should pass, respecting the clergy and laity of the Roman Catholic persuasion coming forward with a declaration of their



religious sentiments, as far as they are connected with *civil and political liberty* ; and it was fully explained that the expectation was that their clergy and laity should do it *as separate bodies*—which resolution having met with an unanimous concurrence, the assembly adjourned.

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BELFAST, 28TH JANUARY, 1792.

AT a very numerous and respectable meeting of the Town of Belfast, convened by public advertisement, signed by 53 inhabitants, held in the town-house, and from thence adjourned, for want of room, to the New Meeting-House :

THE REV. SINCLARE KELBURN

IN THE CHAIR :

A MOTION was made and seconded, that a committee be now appointed to prepare a Petition to Parliament, and that the Prayer of said Petition be as follows :

That our Roman Catholic brethren have long been, and still are, in a degraded situation, from numerous restrictive and penal statutes hanging over them ; and conscious as we are, that the prosperity, happiness, and improvement of this country, must eventually depend on an union of interests among all religious denominations of the inhabitants—We therefore pray the legislature may be pleased to repeal, (from time to time, and as speedily as the circumstances of the country, and the welfare of the whole kingdom will permit) all penal and restrictive statutes at present in existence against the Roman Catholics of Ireland ; that they may be thus restored to the rank and consequence of citizens. .

A motion was made and seconded, that said Petition be amended, by expunging the following words—“ from time to time, and as speedily as the



circumstances of the country, and the welfare of the whole kingdom will permit"—which motion, after a long debate, passed in the affirmative, by a very large majority.

A MOTION was made and seconded, that the said petition, as now amended, do stand the petition of the inhabitants of Belfast to parliament, which passed in the affirmative, without a division.

A MOTION was made and seconded, that the following be the preamble to said petition :

To the Right Hon. and Honourable the Knights, Citizens, and Burgeesses, in Parliament assembled ;

THE humble Petition of the Inhabitants of the Town of Belfast, by public advertisement convened in the Town-House—

WHICH passed unanimously.

A MOTION was made and seconded, that the said petition be copied fair—signed by the inhabitants, and enclosed in a letter from our chairman to the Right Hon. John O'Neill, requesting him, in the name of the town, to present the same to parliament, which passed unanimously.

A MOTION was made and seconded, that we think it the duty, as well as the interest, of the clergy and laity of the Roman Catholics of Ireland, to follow the recent example of fifteen hundred Catholics of England, by making a solemn declaration of their religious principles, as far as they are connected with civil and political liberty—which passed unanimously.

RESOLVED unanimously, That the proceedings of the day be published twice in the Dublin Evening Post, and in each of the Belfast News-papers.

SINCLARE KELBURN.

THE Chairman having left the chair, and James Ferguson, Esq. having been called to it—

RESOLVED unanimously, That the warmest thanks of this meeting are due to our chairman, for his very impartial and proper conduct in the chair.

JAMES FERGUSON.

BELFAST, JANUARY 19, 1792.

AT a numerous and respectable meeting of the Catholics of Belfast and its district :

THE REV. HUGH O'DONNELL, P. P.

IN THE CHAIR :

THE following Resolutions were unanimously agreed to :

RESOLVED, That the hitherto peaceable demeanour of the Catholics of Ireland, must give the legislature the most unequivocal proof of their loyalty to his Majesty, obedience to laws, and attachment to the constitution of the realm.

RESOLVED, That the general committee of the Catholics of Dublin, deputed as they are by the general voice of our body from all parts of the kingdom, is, and ought to be, the only organ through which our opinions can be declared, and through which our sentiments can or ought to be made known ; and we solicit that committee of friends and patriots in the cause of our emancipation, to accept our sincere and warmest thanks, for their uniform zeal in supporting our cause, by humble applications to the legislature in our behalf.

RESOLVED, That we detest and hold in abhorrence any individual, however exalted his rank or situation, who steps forward with insidious zeal and untrue fabrications, to represent us as a DIVIDED PEOPLE, INDIFFERENT to that degree of emancipation which the general committee are constitutionally, and we trust not ineffectually, soliciting from government ; and well knowing that our sect entertain no principles hostile to the constitution, we hold in abhorrence the sentiments set forth in a late address, " that *any circumstances*, or situation of the empire, should render the repeal of ALL penal statutes dangerous or impolitic."

RESOLVED, That as some doubts may still exist, from malignant insinuations having gone forth, that our worthy Protestant Brethren of Ulster, (who have lately so distinguished themselves, by forming the

Societies of United Irishmen, by their proceedings at the late town meeting, [\*] and by other public acts in our favour) are not sincere in their expressions, as set forth in their liberal declarations, we cheerfully stand forward to assert, that such insinuations are groundless and void of truth; and that we with great pleasure contemplate that true spirit of christianity which produces the harmony, brotherly love, and affection subsisting among us.

RESOLVED, That our warmest thanks be given to Mr. Patrick Byrne, Mr. Richard Cross, and Mr. James R. Kelly, our three worthy representatives in the general committee.

RESOLVED, That these our unanimous resolutions be published in the Dublin Evening Post, in the Belfast News-Letter, and the Northern Star.

Signed by order of the meeting,

HU. O'DONNELL, Chairman.

AT a meeting of the THIRD SOCIETY of UNITED IRISHMEN of Belfast, on the 23d of January, 1792 :

RESOLVED unanimously, that we adopt the following as the engagement of our plighted faith to our country and to each other, to be subscribed by every member on his admission, viz. We pledge

\* This alludes to a meeting of *Freeholders* of the county of Antrim, resident at Belfast, respecting a Knight of the Shire in the room of Lord Langford, on the 18th of January, 1792, one of which Resolutions ran thus :

“That we consider the proceedings of the freeholders at the late county meeting, held at Ballymena, deserving our highest approbation, in having established a proper test, to be taken by every Candidate for the representation of the county—a test, in which an adequate representation of the *Irish Nation* in the *Commons' House*, forms the principal feature—a representation, which when introduced and established on *liberal principles*, including every religious description of Irishmen, must procure all those beneficial measures so properly pointed out in said test.”

ourselves to our Country, and mutually to each other, that we will steadily support, and endeavour, by all due means, to carry into effect the following Resolutions :

1st, RESOLVED, “ That the weight of English  
“ influence in the government of this country, is  
“ so great as to require a cordial union among all  
“ the people of Ireland, to maintain that balance  
“ which is essential to the preservation of our liberties, and the extension of our commerce.

2d, RESOLVED, “ That the sole constitutional  
“ mode by which this influence can be opposed, is  
“ by a compleat and radical reform of the representation of the people in Parliament.

3d, “ That no reform is practicable, efficacious,  
“ and just, which shall not include IRISHMEN of  
“ every religious persuasion.”

Signed by order,

ALEX. WATT, Sec.

BELFAST, 30TH JANUARY, 1792.

LEST any misapprehensions should arise respecting the difference of opinion which took place at the late meeting of Protestant and Roman Catholic inhabitants of this town, held on Saturday last: We the undersigned, who dissent, in a certain degree, from the proceedings of that day, think it proper to declare, that *the only* point of difference was—whether the entire enfranchisement of the Roman Catholics of Ireland, including SUFFRAGE AT ELECTIONS, should be *immediate*; or *progressive*—“ from time to time, and as speedily as the circumstances of the country, and the general welfare of the whole kingdom will permit.”

[THE words marked with inverted commas were those which were expunged from the prayer of the petition.]

Wm. Bristow, Sovn.	Alex. Bailie	James Williamson
of Belfast	Robert Kingmill	James Mullin
A. H. Haliday, M. D.	Charles Brett	George Robinson
Wm. Bruce, D. D.	Thomas Banks	Wm. Irwin
R. Meade, (Revd.)	George Bamber	James M'Adam
P. Vance, (Revd.)	James Black	James Steele
John Ewing	Arthur Buntin	Robt. Montgomery
John Holmes	Jn. Holmes, junr.	Adam Brown
Wad. Cunningham	Alex. Gordon	James Russell
Thos. Hyde	R. Mc. Cluney	Henry Bleakley
Barth. Fuller	John Milford	Wm. Donaldson
Henry Joy	John Robinsen	Robt. M'Millen
John Ashmore	David Thoburn	John M'Curdy
Cun. Greg	John Brown	Andrew M. Clune
Narcissus Batt	John Ferguson	David M'Adam
John H. Houston	Samuel Law	James Park
Jas. Bristow (Knt.)	Chas. Mackenzie	John Lascelles
Sam. H. Batt	Thomas Cavan	Wm. Lascelles
Hill Wallace	Andrew Macnevin	John Sanders
Robert Holmes	Jas. Montgomery	Stephen Strickland
John Brown	Samuel Ferguson	Joseph Germain
David Dunn	John M'Cammon	Thomas Ansley
James Holmes	James Martin	John M'Nair
Robert Davis	Alex. Moreland	John Germain
Stewart Banks	James Wier	Thomas Gray
Robt. Apsley, M. D.	Hugh Graham	John Moor
John Clarke	Robert Hilditch	John Frazer
Thos. Greg	Christ. Hudson	Francis Warrick
Wm. Seed	Adams M'Master	Henry Milholland
Sam. Brown	Simon M'Creary	James Sloan
Wm. Burges	Robert Hodgson	Robt. Singleton
Wm. Burden	Francis Joy	Thomas Allen
Val. Jones	John Thoburn	Wm. Allen
John Alexander	Jos. Thoburn, senr.	James Ainsworth
John Cranston	Marcus Ward	Samuel Smith
George Black	Joseph Smith	Robt. M'Dowell
Alex. Orr	Wm. Stewart	Henry Ingram
John Brown	Samuel Smith	Michael Smyth
Wm. Stevenson	George Beck	Saml. M'Cutchin
Wm. Irvin	Harris Beck	Wm. Greer
John Campbell	Joseph Beck	Alex. Brown
Charles Ranken	John Reid	Clotw. M'Quinn
J. Mattear, M. D.	Richard Murdoch	Wm. Fletcher
George Joy	James Moore	Nat. Main
James Ferguson	Thos. M'Cracken	Alex. M'Neilly
John Hamilton	Arch. Stewart	John Boyd
Robert Gordon	Wm. Walker	Wm. Campbell
James Cleland	Robert Elliot	Wm. Taylor



R. Gordon, jun.	Ferd. Fitzsimonds	David Irvin
Richard Damber	James Graham	James M'Master
David Tomb	Stewart Lowry	Conway Carleton
John Galt Smith	James Frazer	John Baker
John Mathers	Jos. Mollineaux	George Rippet
Robt. Bradshaw	James Milliken	James Baker
Hugh Wilson	Robert Brown	Arch. M'Clure
John Macartney	Robert Getty	Thos. Herdman
John Henderson	George Herdman	Robert Bailie
Abel Hadfiskis	Wm. M'Cune	Wm. Scott
John Gregg	James White	Walter M'Maw
Jas T. Kennedy	David Gilliland	Wm. Martin
Geo. Black, junr.	Richard Lunn	John Beatty
Sam. Hyde	Thomas Herdman	Saml. Hodgson
John Smylie	Robert Byars	James Mulligan
Robt. Stevenson	Robert Trimble	Charles Henry
Sam. Robinson	James Law	David Mollyneaux
Wm. Thomson	David Mitchell	John Gilmore
John Getty	Wm. Anderson	James Sufferen
Robert Wallace	John M'Kee	James Johnston
Fat Mc. Master	Samuel M'Clelland	Samuel Mitchell
Gilbert Webster	Joseph Thoburn	Wm. Sayers
Thos. Andrews	Robt. Henderson	Thomas Fulton
Wm. Seed, M. D.	Alex. Moody	Stewart B. Craig
Edward Patterson	David Bradford	John Sutton
(Revd.)	John Turnley	John H. Corbett
Ezek. D. Boyd	Edward Hunt	John Elliott
Ezek. D. Boyd, junr.	G. B. Madden	James Hunter
J. Hamilton, Rev.	Thos. Lyle	Jos. Stevenson, junr.
Francis Turnly	John Stevenson	John Ross.
Joseph Stevenson	Nicholas Mercer	Alex. Mc. Ilrath
Val. Joyce	Richard Barnet	John Mc. Millan
Wm. England	Hugh Jelly	Lewis H. Macklin,
Wm. Gow	James Johnston	(Revd.)
James Crombee	John Lynch	Wm. Atkinson
Saml. Brown	Wm. M'Cormick	Michael Campbell
Thomas Graham	Wm. Goyer	Orr Reid
Hugh Kyle	N. Alexander	Robert Scott



## BELFAST ROMAN CATHOLIC SOCIETY.

AT a meeting of the Roman Catholic inhabitants of the town of Belfast and its vicinity, held at Mr. Hugh Dowell's, on the 6th of April, 1792,

MR. JAMES MOONEY, in the Chair:

THE declaration of the General Committee of the Catholics of Ireland being read paragraph by paragraph, the following resolutions were agreed to—

RESOLVED unanimously, That the declaration is strictly conformable with our principles as christians and Catholics, agreeable to the tenets of the faith we have maintained, and that we will ever adhere to them.

RESOLVED unanimously, That we solemnly declare we have never harboured opinions inimical to the civil, religious, or political liberty of mankind; particularly of our fellow-subjects of a different persuasion.

RESOLVED unanimously, That so far from entertaining the most distant thought of disturbing the tranquillity of the kingdom, by unsettling the landed property thereof, our highest ambition is to participate in the constitution of our country; and we do most heartily concur in a solemn declaration, that we never will join in any attempt to overthrow the Protestant government of Ireland.

RESOLVED unanimously, That the thanks of this meeting be presented to the General Catholic Committee, for their steady, manly, and constitutional proceedings in their late application to the legislature; and we entreat they may persevere until the efforts be crowned with success.

RESOLVED unanimously, That the sincerest and most grateful thanks of this meeting be given to the virtuous and enlightened members of the legislature, who supported with their unrivalled abilities, the petition of three millions of his Majesty's faithful subjects, in order to restore them to their long lost

rights; and to obtain for them a participation in the scale of government, with the minority of their fellow subjects.

RESOLVED unanimously, That the warmest thanks of this meeting be given to William Todd Jones, and Theobald Wolfe Tone, Esqrs. for their laborious and unwearied exertions, to rescue the character of the unhappy Catholics from the aspersions of malevolent and bigoted Partizans; and for their uniform tenor of conduct to restore the injured Catholic to the state that God and nature designed him for.

RESOLVED unanimously, That "while memory holds her seat," we shall never forget the glorious and philanthropic effort our fellow citizens made on the 28th of January last, in being the first Protestant body in the kingdom, who evinced that they felt for the sufferings of their Catholic brethren, by presenting a petition in their behalf to the legislature; and they are hereby requested to accept of the warm effusions of hearts overflowing with gratitude for the same.

RESOLVED unanimously, That our chairman transmit a copy of the above resolutions to Edward Byrne, Esq. chairman of the Catholic Committee, Wm. T. Jones, Esq. and Theob. Wolfe Tone, Esq.

RESOLVED unanimously, That the above resolutions be published twice in the Belfast newspapers, and National Journal.

RESOLVED unanimously, That 5000 copies of the declaration of the General Catholic Committee of Ireland, with these our resolutions, be printed in hand-bills.

JAMES MOONEY.

Mr. Mooney having left the chair, and Mr. Heyland having taken it,

RESOLVED, That the thanks of this meeting be given to Mr. Mooney, for his praise worthy conduct in the chair.

CHARLES HEYLAND.

THE following is a copy of the letter from Edward Byrne, Esq. Chairman of the General Committee of the Roman Catholics of Ireland, to the Revd. S. Kelburn, as chairman of the meeting of the inhabitants of Belfast, held 28th January, 1792.

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S I R,

IN compliance with the instructions of the General Committee of Roman Catholics, I inclose you a copy of the resolutions which passed at our meeting on this day.

I AM directed to assure you, that we feel a deep sense of the obligations we owe to you, and your worthy fellow-citizens of Belfast, for the marks of kindness which we have, on former occasions, received from you, and particularly for the petition which you have lately determined to present to parliament in our behalf.

WE hope this petition will have its due weight with the legislature; at all events, it will remain a lasting monument of your liberality and patriotism.—Indeed we are convinced that you long regretted, tho' you did not feel in your own persons, the weight of the absurd prejudices which disturbed, and still continue to disturb, the harmony of social life, and to divide the people of Ireland into distinct, and almost hostile, communities.—We now, however, look with confidence for a melioration of national manners; and we hope your example will induce others to lay aside their animosities against us, and to accept the friendship which we are ambitious to cultivate with our countrymen of every religious denomination.

NOTWITHSTANDING the calumnies which are daily propagated to our disadvantage, and the insidious arts which bad men employ to keep one part of Ireland in a state of sullen separation from the other, we venture to prognosticate the approach of that

auspicious day, when the people of this country, moulded into one common mass by the compressing hand of the same protecting system, shall cease to have any other object in view—than the public good and public happiness.

AMONG the various descriptions of men whom Providence has placed in the same country, there are features of moral distinction, as well as of moral resemblance, and yet the business of society is carried on under all the known varieties of temper, opinion, and ability:—in the same manner we conceive that a difference of sentiment, with regard to religious doctrines and modes of worship, would not be likely to impair the strength and unity of the state.—There is one point in which we all agree—the civil and political welfare of our country; and by this point do the Roman Catholics wish to be connected with their countrymen, in a common bond of fellowship and constitutional right.

WE feel no political insufficiency or defect which should exclude us, in any respect, from the bosom of our country, and we are happy to find that you view us in the same light. Resting on this proof of your liberality, we trust, however, that you will not charge us with any degeneracy of spirit, if, willing to gratify the prejudices, which are still to be found among many of our countrymen, we solicit admission into the constitution, on such terms as shall offer as little violence as possible, to the feelings of men, who think that every change is an hazardous experiment, and that every link taken from the chain of oppression is likely to produce anarchy instead of order, public tumult instead of public security.

THE object of our present application is therefore a partial admission only to the rights of free subjects, but if our success should go beyond our expectations, we shall feel a more lively sense of gratitude to those, who with such a superiority to prejudice have declared us worthy of total emancipation.

IF we have ventured to call the attention of our country to our serious and manifold grievances, it is not to kindle civil discord, but to strengthen the bonds of civil union, and to give to our Protestant brethren an opportunity of ennobling their own character and that of our common country, by a generous triumph over the jealousies and antipathies which have forced us from our natural rank in society.

WHATEVER may be our fate, whether we shall be received into the Constitution, or dismissed from its door with disdain; we shall ever retain a grateful remembrance of the patriotic exertions of you and your fellow-citizens in our favor, and we earnestly solicit a continuance of your friendship and patronage. You have set an example of true public spirit to Ireland, and to Europe at large—and we flatter ourselves that you could not have better evinced your love of liberty, than by the means which you have recommended for its conservation; a communication of its blessings to the Roman Catholics of this country.

I AM further directed by the General Committee to inform you that, altho' our oath of allegiance contains in substance an explanation of our tenets and opinions, yet in deference to your advice, we have it under consideration to follow the example of several English Roman Catholics, by making a solemn declaration of our religious principles, as far as they are connected with civil and religious liberty; which we hope will give satisfaction to all, who like you, are open to conviction founded on truth and reason.

I have the honor to be,  
with the greatest respect,  
your's sincerely,  
EDWARD BYRNE,

Dublin,  
4th February, 1793.



AT a meeting of the General Committee of Roman Catholics, held at the King's Arms, in Fownes's-street, on Saturday the 4th day of February, 1792:

EDWARD BYRNE, ESQ.

IN THE CHAIR,

THE following Resolutions were unanimously agreed to:

RESOLVED, That the warmest thanks of this General Committee be given to the inhabitants of Belfast, who with a liberality that does the greatest honour to themselves and to their country, have agreed to present a Petition to Parliament for the repeal of the penal and restrictive statutes under which the Roman Catholics of this kingdom at present labour.

RESOLVED, That the chairman of this meeting be requested to forward a copy of the above Resolutions to the chairman of the Belfast meeting, accompanied with a letter, expressive of our gratitude to him and his fellow-citizens.

EDWARD BYRNE,  
CHAIRMAN.

### *EXECUTION OF THE LAW,*

BY THE CIVIL POWER.

APRIL 14, 1792.

ON Thursday morning last, a detachment of the Belfast First Volunteer Company, marched at the request of the sheriff of this county, in order to aid him in taking possession of a house and farm, in the townland of Derrymore, and barony of Upper-Massereene, which was forcibly withheld. The party marched at six o'clock in the morning, with one of the company's field pieces, (a brass six-pounder) and arrived at the spot (distant 20 miles).



about two o'clock.—Upwards of an hour having been spent in fruitless entreaties and remonstrances, to prevail upon the deluded people to give up the possession peaceably, and every proposal of representing their conduct in the most favourable point of view, to the proprietor of the lands, having been rejected; at three o'clock the sheriff ordered the corps to fire upon the house, which was occupied by a considerable body of very desperate banditti, in support of the possessors.—A hot action immediately commenced, in which the occupiers made every exertion, as well by a continued fire from the house, as by sallies, and annoying the party from the hedges. The assailants, however, rapidly advanced, and kept up a well-directed fire from the artillery and small arms:—about four o'clock, the house (tho' very strong) having been much shattered, the occupiers, who had retired in the rear, began to make their escape in different directions; about ten of the most timid, who were the first in flying, got off in a boat over Loughneagh, some others escaped by land, but four of the ring-leaders (including two of the people who held the possession) were apprehended, and delivered over to the Magistrates and Constables of the district, in order to be sent to the county gaol. Thus a decided conquest has been obtained by the corps over the opposers of the laws of the land, in one of the wildest and most lawless districts in this part of the kingdom.

It gives us much pleasure to announce, that in the execution of this important business, no individual was materially hurt.—The detachment returned to Lisburn on Thursday evening, having marched upwards of thirty-two miles, and arrived here yesterday morning, without the slightest injury or accident having happened to any individual.

THE parties who held the possession forcibly, were not the descendants of the former occupiers, who had been tenants at will, but distant relations,

who obtruded themselves upon the premises, and who had no claim on the inheritance, either in *law*, *equity*, or *benevolence*.

THE sheriff could not, on this occasion, obtain aid from the army, without a certificate of his incapacity to enforce the law with the civil power—and such a certificate, it was thought, would not only be *disgraceful* to the COUNTY OF ANTRIM—but would tend to the extension of the infamous *Police Bill*, to this quarter of the kingdom.

TO WADDEL CUNNINGHAM, ESQ.

CAPTAIN OF THE  
BELFAST FIRST VOLUNTEER COMPANY.

SIR,

I REQUEST you will accept, and have the goodness to present, my warmest thanks to the other members of the FIRST COMPANY, for the very kind and honourable support I have experienced from you in the execution of the law;—I am altogether unable to say how much I feel personally the obligation, from the flattering manner of it, or how much I admired the steady perseverance of the Company through a march of forty miles—and a service both hazardous and fatiguing. I know the object of the Company was TO ENFORCE THE LAW; and rely that this proof of their zeal and resolution, by making it evident that resistance must be ineffectual, will in future prevent it; and I am persuaded that on this occasion, you have rendered a fresh and highly essential service to your country.

I remain, Sir, your obliged,  
and most obedient humble servant,  
ALEX. McNEILL,  
Under-sheriff of the County Antrim.

## COUNTY OF ANTRIM.

AT a General Quarter Sessions of the Peace, held at Antrim, in and for the county of Antrim, the 19th of April, 1792, the Justices then and there assembled; did unanimously resolve that the thanks of the Bench be returned to Waddell Cunningham, Esq. and the First Belfast Volunteer Company, under his command, for their manly and spirited exertions in the support of the laws, having marched twenty miles with artillery and small arms, to assist the Sheriff of said county in executing a writ of Habere on the lands of Derrymore, in the upper half barony of Massereene, in the possession of Patrick Corr and others, who with an armed force, not only opposed the said Sheriff in the execution of his office, but on the approach of the volunteers, commenced a heavy and constant fire from behind hedges, and also from a dwelling-house on said lands, which last they defended after a considerable part was battered down and 'till finally carried by assault.

RESOLVED unanimously, That the thanks of the Bench be returned to Mr. Alexander M'Neill, Under Sheriff of said county for his spirited and proper conduct on the above occasion,

By Order of the Court,

SAMUEL HERON,

Acting Clerk of the Peace.

## POLISH REVOLUTION.

ON the 3d May, 1792, being the anniversary of the Revolution of Poland, a numerous and very respectable company of gentlemen, dined together at the Donegal-Arms Inn, in this town, in order to commemorate that happy event.—Waddell Cunningham, Esq. was appointed chairman, and amongst others, the following TOASTS were given :

THE Revolution in Poland, and its Patriot King.  
 —The Revolution of France.—The Rights of Man,  
 and Mr. Paine.—The Sovereignty of the People.—  
 The King of Ireland.—The Prince of Wales.—May  
 Philosophy enlighten all Nations, and form the  
 whole into one vast family.—The constituting and  
 Legislative Assemblies of France.—The American  
 Congress, and the illustrious Washington.—Lord  
 Charlemont and the Volunteers of Ireland.—15th  
 February, 1782.—The Society for the abolition  
 of the Slave Trade.—The Revolution Society of  
 London.—The Conquerors of the French Bastile.—  
 The Memory of all good citizens who have fallen  
 in the cause of Liberty.—The Liberty of the Press.  
 —Mr. Fox, and success to his Bill, for rendering  
 Truth no longer a libel.—Mr. Grattan, and the  
 minority of the House of Commons of Ireland.—  
 An equal Representation of the People of Ireland,  
 in Parliament.—James Napper Tandy, and a speedy  
 check to unconstitutional and undefined privileges.  
 —May the People of Ireland be united, and all  
 enjoy equal Liberty.—Magna Charta, and the Ba-  
 rons of Runnymede.—An hearty drubbing to the  
 King of Hungary, and all the enemies of France.  
 May we be speedily called upon to celebrate the  
 emancipation of all the enslaved nations of the  
 world.

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MAY 18, 1792.

THE Belfast Second Society of United Irishmen,  
 at a meeting on Tuesday evening, unanimously, re-  
 solved on contributing their share of money to assist  
 the people of France in the present war, undertaken  
 in support of the new constitution of that country—  
 and that they will continue so to do while the pre-  
 sent war, in defence of the liberties of mankind,  
 may last.

AT a general meeting of the NORTHERN WHIG CLUB, held on the 15th June, 1792, (Anniversary of Magna Charta) :

EDWARD JONES AGNEW, ESQ.

IN THE CHAIR,

THE following Resolutions were unanimously agreed to :

THAT we have observed with pleasure, the introduction and success of a bill in the House of Commons of Great-Britain; declaratory of the power of JURIES in matters of LIBEL.

THAT it is our ardent wish that a bill for the same purpose may be carried through the two Houses of Legislature in Ireland, and become the law of this land.

THAT we highly admire *Mr. Fox*, that steady friend to civil and religious liberty, as the original mover in the British House of Commons of a bill so long wanted, to settle the intent of the law, by making its spirit and practice agree;—as well as *Earl Camden*, for the ability and consistency with which he supported it in its progress thro' the House of Lords.

ADMIRING AS WE DO the principles and structure of our Constitution, we think it incumbent on us to express our ardent wish, that it may soon be rendered as perfect *de facto*, as it is *de jure*; or, in other words, that the people may speedily come to be fairly and equally represented in the Legislature of both Kingdoms.

EDWARD JONES AGNEW,  
CHAIRMAN.

#### NATIONAL MUSIC OF IRELAND.

A RESPECTABLE body of the inhabitants of Belfast having published a plan for reviving the ancient music of this country, and the project having met with



such support and approbation as must insure success to the undertaking, PERFORMERS ON THE IRISH HARP are requested to assemble in this town on the 10th day of July next, when a considerable sum will be distributed in premiums, in proportion to their respective merits.

It being the intention of the committee that every performer shall receive *some* premium, it is hoped that no Harper will decline attending on account of his having been unsuccessful on any former occasion.

ROBERT BRADSHAW,  
Secretary and Treasurer.

Belfast,  
26th April, 1792.

#### NATIONAL MUSIC OF IRELAND.

JULY 13, 1792.

THE number of Harpers that were present in our Exchange Rooms on Wednesday last, and who are to continue to assemble in the same place for three days longer, were *ten*—a sufficient proof of the declining state of that simple but expressive instrument, and of the propriety of holding out every lure to prevent the original music of this country from being lost. As a principal motive in this undertaking was to revive some of the most ancient airs, now nearly obsolete, their dates and authors perhaps for centuries unknown, pains will be taken to reduce to notes such of those that have been played on this occasion, as may lead to a general publication of the best sets of our tunes. No one that remembers the exquisite finger of DOMINIC, will hesitate to confess the capability of the Harp of Ireland, and how worthy it is of preservation. By such means alone can our national airs be saved from oblivion. Wales and Ireland have a national music, while England has none; if she had, it would not, like that of the two first countries, be only in the hands of a few itinerant minstrels.



THE following is the order in which the Harpers played:

DENNIS DEMPSEY, (blind) from the county of Derry, aged 86.

ARTHUR O'NEILL, (blind) from the county of Tyrone, aged 55.

CHARLES FANNING, from the county of Cavan, aged 56.

DANIEL BLACK, (blind) from the county of Derry, aged 75.

CHARLES BYRNE, from the county of Leitrim, aged 80.

HUGH HIGGINS, (blind) from the county of Mayo, aged 55.

PATRICK QUIN, (blind) from the county of Armagh, aged 70.

WILLIAM CARR, from the county of Armagh, aged 15.

ROSE MOONEY, (blind) from the county of Meath.

JAMES DUNCAN, from the county of Down, aged 45.

The Irish Harpers were succeeded by a *Welsh* one, whose execution was very great. The contrast between the plaintive tones of the Irish instrument, and the bold martial ones of the Welsh, had a pleasing effect; and marked a difference of character between the two nations.

14TH JULY—1792.

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BELFAST REVIEW—AND CELEBRATION  
OF THE  
FRENCH REVOLUTION.

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ON Friday evening, the several country corps marched into town, and were billeted on the inhabitants; who were happy in renewing expressions of affection for their neighbours and friends in the fourteenth year since the commencement of reviews, and in the *sixteenth* of the volunteer æra. Assemblies of smaller bodies than formerly, having been deemed best calculated to preserve at present the military spirit among the citizen-soldiery of Ireland, another review is to be held on Broughshane Moor on the first of August. The number of corps which would otherwise have attended at Belfast having been thus considerably reduced, it was not thought proper to call on the venerable General of the volunteer army of Ulster, the Earl of Charlemont, to attend on this occasion; but the Reviewing General, who acted in his room, was requested by the committee to make a regular return to his Lordship of their numbers, state of discipline, &c. The gentleman appointed in his place was COLONEL SHARMAN, of Moira Castle, who presided with such dignity last year in the civil assembly of the inhabitants of Belfast and its neighbourhood, at the celebration of the French Revolution. An unexpected illness having prevented that justly admired character from filling an office for which he was so eminently qualified, MAJOR CRAWFORD, of Crawford's-burn, was unanimously nominated to act as Reviewing General; in testimony of the respect due to decided virtue in public and private life.

ON Saturday morning a brigade was formed in High street, extending from the Bank to the Quay; and the whole were marched off to the old review-ground in the *Falls*, at about eleven o'clock, by the Exercising Officer, MAJOR M'MANUS.

ON their return to town, at three o'clock, there was a *Grand Procession*, the order of which is mentioned underneath, and feu de joyes were fired in Linen-hall-street by the whole body, in honour of that day, which presented the sublime spectacle of near one *sixth* of the whole inhabitants of *Europe* bursting their chains, and throwing off, almost in an instant, the degrading yoke of slavery.

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#### ORDER OF THE MILITARY AND CIVIL PROCESSION.

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MAJOR CRAWFORD, GENERAL AND PRESIDENT  
FOR THE DAY.

Belfast Troop of Light Dragons, Captain Thomas  
Brown—17.

MAJOR M'MANUS, *Exercising-Officer*,  
and his Aides de Camps.

Artillery of the Belfast First Company (their  
number included in that of their  
corps undermentioned.)

The Colours of FIVE FREE NATIONS—viz.

Flag of IRELAND—motto, *Unite and be free.*

Flag of AMERICA—motto, *The Asylum of Liberty.*

Flag of FRANCE—motto, *The Nation, the Law,  
and the King.*

Flag of POLAND—motto, *We will support it.*

Flag of GREAT BRITAIN—motto, *Wisdom, Spirit,  
and Liberality to the People.*

A FLAG was prepared for the Dutch, (but no one  
could be found to bear it) who were to be represented

by a piece of *common* woollen stuff, half hoisted on a pole, and to be hooted by the populace ; on account of the States having joined the *wicked conspiracy of tyrants* against the LIBERTIES of MAN :

## MOTTO,

*" Heav'ns ! how unlike their Belgian Sires of Old !"*

Portrait of DR. FRANKLIN—motto, *" Where Liberty is, THERE is my Country."*

Belfast First Company, Captain Cunningham,	102
Muckamore Fuzileers, Captain Swan,	42
Larne, Captain Lieutenant Farrel,	40
Randallstown, Captain Dickey,	80
Moirs, Captain Bateman,	75
Dromore First Company, Captain Vaughan,	42
Villa Independents, Captain Hamilton,	30
Ballynahinch, Captain Armstrong,	104
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Total number of First Brigade	532
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Artillery of Belfast Blues (numbers included in those of their corps in Second Brigade.)

## THE GREAT STANDARD,

Elevated on a triumphal car, drawn by four horses, with two Volunteers as supporters, containing on one side of the canvas a representation of

THE RELEASEMENT OF THE PRISONERS FROM  
THE BASTILLE.

Motto—" *Sacred to Liberty.*"

The reverse contained a figure of Hibernia, one hand and foot in shackles ; a Volunteer presenting to her a figure of Liberty.—Motto,

*" For a People to be FREE, it is sufficient that they WILL IT."*

Belfast Blues, Captain Wm. Brown,	92
Downpatrick, Captain Hawthorne,	34
Dromore Light Infantry, Captain Bodle,	34
Carrickfergus, Captain Craig,	- 30
Broughshane, Captain Duffin,	- 62

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Total number of Second Brigade, 258

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[TOTAL NUMBER OF BOTH BRIGADES, 790.]

Portrait of Monsr. MIRABEAU—Motto, “ *Can the African Slave Trade, tho’ MORALLY wrong, be POLITICALLY right?* ”

A considerable number of inhabitants (180) from Carmoney and Templepatrick, formed part of the procession, falling in at the reer of the volunteer body. They bore a green flag, with the following

MOTTO.—“ *Our Gallic brother was born July 14, 1789;*

*Alas! we are still in embryo.* ”

REVERSE.—“ *Superstitious jealousy, the cause of the Irish Bastile; let us unite and destroy it!* ”

THE whole moved forward in the order related, thro’ the principal streets of the town, accompanied by such an immense multitude as never before appeared in this place. After the three *feu de joyes*, the body of volunteers and citizens entered the great square, within the Linen-hall, and having formed a circle, (elevated in the centre of which sat the President, Major Crawford,)—

MR. WILLIAM SINCLAIRE moved an ADDRESS TO THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF FRANCE, inserted afterwards. After some deliberation, but without the slightest appearance of opposition, it was carried without a single dissentient voice; and with such energetic bursts of applause as declared that its principles had the sanction of every understanding, in an assembly of about 1500, (according to the Belfast News-Letter, or 5,000 according

to the Star,] that thus beheld the *triumph of human nature in the freedom of France*. It may with great confidence be asserted, that in no spot in Europe has the FRENCH REVOLUTION been celebrated with more splendour, seriousness, and feeling, than in the town of Belfast, if we except the very country where that astonishing event took place.

THE particular *business of the day* being thus happily disposed of, the former mover proposed an address to the PEOPLE OF IRELAND [inserted underneath].—A long debate took place, which did not terminate 'till seven o'clock in the evening; turning upon a motion by Mr. Joy, for *expunging* the following paragraph which stands part of the address, and inserting another in its room.

WE shall underneath recite both of them, in order that the transactions of the meeting may be known in all its parts to those who were not auditors.

*Paragraph, the EXPUNGEMENT of which was moved for.*

“ BUT while we thus state our sentiments on the  
 “ subject of reform, we feel it incumbent upon  
 “ us to declare, as we now do, that no reform,  
 “ were even such attainable, would answer our  
 “ ideas of utility or justice, which should not  
 “ *equally* include all sects and denominations of  
 “ Irishmen. We reprobate and abhor the idea,  
 “ that *political inequality* should result from reli-  
 “ gious opinions; and we should be ashamed, at  
 “ the moment when we are seeking for liberty our-  
 “ selves, to acquiesce in any system founded on  
 “ the slavery of others.

[*Paragraph proposed in place of the former.*]

“ IN seeking redress of our own grievances, we  
 “ should be unworthy of the blessing of a free con-  
 “ stitution, did we (under the influence either of  
 “ religious or political prejudice) desire to deprive



“ any body of men of their due weight in the  
 “ government of their country. On this princi-  
 “ ple we have uniformly rejoiced in the GRADUAL  
 “ emancipation of our Roman Catholic brethren;  
 “ and we ardently look forward to that day when  
 “ their ENTIRE ENFRANCHISEMENT shall be a mea-  
 “ sure not only of SAFETY, but of EXPEDIENCY;  
 “ when Protestants shall be ready to grant, and  
 “ Catholics to receive. Whatever shall tend to ac-  
 “ celerate that event will have our most strenuous  
 “ support, as we shall zealously co-operate with  
 “ the rest of the inhabitants of Ireland, in the  
 “ attainment of an object so devoutly to be  
 “ wished!”

MR. JOY, after mentioning that the idea of a  
 gradual emancipation of the Roman Catholics of  
 Ireland, had had for many years his best wishes,  
 took the liberty to allege that it were not adviseable  
 for the meeting to declare to the world, that “ *no*  
 REFORM *would answer their ideas of justice and*  
*utility which should not EQUALLY include all sects*  
*and denominations of Irishmen.*” That on a subject  
 involving so momentous an experiment, their  
 language though firm, should be moderate and pre-  
 cise; such as to foster the growing sentiment of li-  
 berality among our Protestant brethren, who are  
 yet unprepared to go hand and hand with the inha-  
 bitants of this place in an instantaneous and un-  
 limited change. That neither the Protestant mind  
 was sufficiently prepared to grant, nor the Catholic  
 one *universally* prepared to receive, a *plenary and*  
*immediate* exercise of every right which members of  
 a state can possibly possess. That, therefore, hold-  
 ing it forth on such an extended scale, might rather  
 widen than close the unhappy chasm which had long  
 separated the two bodies; and that *an union among*  
*Protestants* on this subject, would be highly desirable,  
 as an essential means of serving the very cause in  
 question.

IN defence of the paper, as it originally stood, and was carried, it was said, that its expressions were so guarded that *no point of time* for their liberation was even hinted at. To this it was replied by Mr. Joy, that the passage for that very reason was objectionable and carried its own condemnation ; as a solemn address from such a public body as was then assembled, should be clear and explicit ; whereas this part of it was ambiguous and equivocal. That it should ingenuously declare either a wish to behold an *immediate* and *complete* enfranchisement, or one *gradual* and *progressive* ; as that style of writing which the dignity of so great a popular meeting demanded.

MR. S. NEILSON expressed his astonishment at hearing that, or any part of the address, called a Catholic question ! to his understanding it no more presented a Roman Catholic question than a Church question, a Presbyterian, a Quaker, an Annabaptist, or a Mountain question ; the true question, if any, was, whether IRISHMEN SHOULD BE FREE.

REV. MR. KELBURN rose to oppose the amendment, upon the grounds of right, reason, and justice, and illustrated his reasoning by a comparison to the case of one man's having got possession of the purse of another, the detention of which, he was willing to allow, was unjust, but would tell him, " Friend, I have kept this purse so long from you, that it is impossible you should not be out of humour ; therefore I cannot answer for the use you might make of it : I must wait till I am sure you are pleased and satisfied, and the way I shall take to quiet you is this ; first, I shall consider your case, and perhaps I shall give you the promise of a guinea out of your purse next week, if not sooner, and, if you please me, I shall perhaps give you more some other time, may-be all ; and if you should be dead, I can, you know, as well give it to your children. You cannot now, from the nature of things, be in any capacity to receive it, therefore, for the present, be thankful

for what you get, and the man who advises you to the contrary, is a seditious, bad man." He concluded by observing, that he had listened with wonder and amazement to all that had been said about giving and receiving; he wished that men, before they indulged in all the munificent ostentation of bestowing so liberally, would reflect a moment upon what they had to give, that their generosity might be measured by their means. Poor simple people! what have you to give?—If I have summed it right, the whole inventory of your possessions amounts to no more than this—your rotten constitution, your boroughs, your excise, your pension-list, your taxes, and your tythes; these are your inheritance. Truly it is time to quit this foolery about giving, and join hands and voices with your brethren, to recover the birth-right which you both have lost.

MR. THOMPSON then rose—He observed that the question of right had been established by such irrefragable arguments, (alluding to those of Mr. Keble) that he should consider it as admitted, and confine himself to that of expediency, which seemed the only ground of opposition now existing; and he would weigh expediency against expediency. It was not only expedient, but absolutely necessary, that every Irishman who wished for reform and for freedom, should closely unite, and cease to be divided by names, which only rendered them contemptible to their oppressors. When 70,000 men were up in arms, and demanded a reform, and often tried to obtain it, they as often tried in vain;—why? because there was no union amongst Irishmen. When any proposition was brought forward in parliament, favourable to the general liberty, it was the subject of ridicule and contempt to both parties—the parliament treated it with derision, because it wanted the energy, that unanimity alone could give it, and the Roman Catholics themselves laughed at an attempt so impotent and abortive.

THE REV. T. BIRCH, of Saintfield, said, he was very much astonished to hear such talk of liberality and concessions, whilst we were criminally unjust, as well as impolitic, in withholding their rights from our Catholic brethren. He would rather, he said, transport himself to Botany Bay, than live in a country which continued to keep itself in abject slavery, by its internal divisions.

COUNSELLOR STEWART, in support of the amendment, argued, that it was unfair that an address should go abroad as the voice of the people, when such numbers were strongly averse to a great part of it. Certainly, he said, there were many who might, after a little time, and by gentle degrees, be persuaded to yield up their prejudices, and many who wished well to the cause, as he himself did, who had their fears, and their habits of associating danger, with the idea of immediate emancipation. To disgust this portion of the citizens, by any precipitate resolutions, could not fail to be dangerous—it would only be to make enemies of those who were in the way to become friends, and, by creating unnecessary divisions, ruin the general cause. It would be much wiser, by tempering our measures to the actual state of affairs, and the general mind, to endeavour to bring with us all descriptions of men. By so doing, the cause would be all-powerful; at present there was bigotry on both sides. There were bigoted Catholics as well as bigoted Protestants—till this bigotry could be overcome, it would be in vain to look for union—Mr. Stewart, however, concluded his speech, which was of considerable length, with expressing his sentiments strongly in favour of liberality, and his abhorrence of any thing like oppression or unnecessary restriction.

MR. GETTY rose to order, and added a few words in answer to what had been argued, respecting the state of the public mind. No later, he observed,

than the session before last, no man was found bold enough to bring forward any proposition in parliament, favourable to the Catholics—how great a change has there happened between that period and the present day—see also how much the inhabitants of this town and its neighbourhood have changed their minds. At last year's commemoration, even the amendment proposed by Mr. Joy, and the learned gentleman's arguments, in support of that amendment, would have been measures in favour of universal liberty, too strong to have been attempted with any prospect of success. From which short review of the dispositions of parliament and people, it was a necessary inference, that the public mind would rapidly fall in with the sense of this Assembly, that all fears on that head were groundless, and that we were warranted in venturing to declare our sentiments boldly, and trusting for profelytes to the justice of the cause.

COUNSELLOR SAMPSON begged the indulgence of being heard, while he endeavoured shortly to express his approbation of the address, as moved by Mr. Sinclair, and his reasons for approving it. He found himself in that assembly almost accidentally, and as to the question before it, he stood unconnected with any party, or with any person; nor had ever heard or seen the address, till that moment. He had been led, from the rumour of the day, to expect something rather intemperate, but was pleased to find in the address to the people of Ireland, no more than he, as a man, tolerably free from prejudices upon such subjects, could willingly and warmly assent to. That no reform could answer the purposes of utility or justice, but such as included all Irishmen willing to be free, and that we should blush to accept of any system founded on the slavery of others, was a liberal and general sentiment of generosity and benevolence which he would be ashamed to dissent from. But there was another point started by the amendment, and supported by some argument,



upon which he was not so well prepared to give either his vote or his opinion, which was the necessity of gradual emancipation to our brother Catholics. He was as far from embracing that sentiment, as he was from opposing it, but he would hesitate about giving his voice, which, however humble, would go forth as one individual in that aggregate, which it was plain, would be the majority of the assembly, if he conceived himself thereby involved in a question, which, important and interesting as it was, he had not sufficiently considered. He hoped if he should ever be present where that question was the real point of discussion, to be better able to give his sentiments; and if by fair argument and reason, some difficulties which appeared to him at present, could be dispelled, he would be as warm to support that point, as he was now to support the address.—Meantime, for want of having sufficiently thought on the subject, and of the habit of speaking publicly, he despaired of making any impression, and would content himself with voting against the amendment, because he could not see in the address, any necessity for amendment, and because it provoked a discussion, which he did not think very properly introduced, either as to time or place, and which the address as it stands, was more wisely and temperately calculated to avoid.

DOCTOR CALDWELL, of Magherafelt, delivered his sentiments in so low a tone of voice, that we could not distinctly hear him—he seemed principally to dwell on the absurdity of celebrating the emancipation of twenty-five millions of Frenchmen, (twenty-two millions of whom, are Catholics), and yet hesitate to aid in the emancipation of three millions of our fellow-subjects, of the same persuasion.—Those who were within hearing of the Doctor, speak in warm terms of the manly good sense displayed in his speech.

REV. DR. DICKSON, of Portaferry, addressed the assembly in a speech replete with such strong



sense and keen irony, as renders us unable to give our readers an adequate conception of it.—He was happy to find, by the confession of gentlemen themselves, that there was no difference of opinion, as to the point of justice—the question rested in expediency. Gentlemen had abruptly hauled in the word Catholic, where no such people had been talked of, and spoke of something which they called gradual emancipation; the words sounded like something—yet what was their meaning—no man had pointed out how, when, or where this ladder was to be formed, by which three millions of men were to mount to liberty—what was the first step? how many were there? what was the interval between them?—He would suppose this ladder to be the penal code, which was to be gradually abolished statute by statute, section by section, sentence by sentence, or, rather to meet the gradual progression of gentlemen's ideas, he would suppose, letter by letter. But when was the emancipation to commence? was it to begin to-morrow, next month, next year, next century, or happily in the next world? Gentlemen had also talked of the incapacity of the Catholics to receive liberty, from their ignorance; if they were ignorant, it must be owing to the wild system of our laws; but he denied the fact. There was no such ignorance or incapacity in them; wherever the law allowed them to exercise their functions, they did it very much in the ordinary way; they make and wear their own cloaths as we do, they understand and practice the cultivation of the land as well as we do, they excel in all the common arts as well as we do, and do we not see them quit the humble paths of life to prove themselves an ingenious and commercial people, as well as bending their minds to the study of philosophy, the useful branches of literature, and the fine arts, as successfully as we do? If we look back to the publications of the last twelve months, produced by members of that body, Protestants may find ample

reason to blush on a comparison.—In what respect then have they indicated that want of capacity which we have been so liberally proposing to impart to them, before they can become fit for the enjoyment of freedom?—and what is meant by the word gradual?—are they to ascend in a determinate or indeterminate length of time to this degree of capacity? is it to come to pass in this generation, or is it to be postponed till a future one, till by intermarrying with the wise and capable Protestants, and particularly with us Presbyterians, they may mend the breed, and produce a race of beings who will inherit a capacity from us? But since they are at present so deficient, why do not some of the gentlemen who are now exercising their brilliant talents in opposing their emancipation, proceed to illuminate their minds, and out of the overflowing superabundance of their knowledge and ability, part with a little modicum to enlighten the darkness, and fill up the mental deficiency of the Catholics of Ireland? Let it still, however, be remembered, that we can do no more in this assembly than express our own sentiments—we do not dictate to any other people, nor is it in the power of this assembly, to say that the Catholics ever shall be free—still less, when they shall be so; but this good effect will result from our resolutions, that going abroad into the country, they will stir up the spirit of inquiry; for men who now differ widely from us, will be led by curiosity to enquire, by what reasons and upon what principles the inhabitants of Belfast and its vicinity, who are known to be men of sense and independence, who cultivate their understandings and hold a considerable intercourse with mankind, have taken up their mode of thinking? And they, in their turn, will be gradually emancipated from the slavery of prejudice, and bigotry, and their reason and their consciences having fair play, they may become as enlightened as they seem to think it necessary their brethren should be.

THE issue of the debate was, that the motion for expunging was lost by a great majority, the dissentients being confined to a very small number; and that the address, as originally proposed, became the act of the assembled body.

The evening closed with an entertainment, at the Donegall-Arms, where 104 persons sat down at dinner, when the General, who was also President of the day, announced the toasts prepared by a committee; of which the following is a copy.

*THE FOURTEENTH OF JULY, 1789.*

THE King of Ireland.—The Constitution of France; may it be permanent.—The Constituting Assembly of France.—The National Assembly of France; may wisdom, spirit and decision direct its counsels.—The French army; may an ardent love of their country be held paramount to every other duty in the character of a soldier.—Confusion to the enemies of French Liberty.—May the Glorious Revolution of France teach the Governments of the earth wisdom.—May the example of one Revolution prevent the necessity of others.—Lasting freedom and prosperity to the United States of America.—The people of Poland, and success to their arms.—The Rights of Man; may all nations have wisdom to understand, and spirit to assert them.—The Union of Irishmen, without which we can never be free.—The Sovereignty of the People, acting by a just and equal Representation.—The Liberty of the Press.—The Volunteers of Ireland, and their revered General, Earl of Charlemont.—The Constitutional Societies of Great Britain and Ireland.—The Society for the abolition of the Slave Trade.—President Washington.—Stanislaus Augustus, may his example be imitated.—Mr Paine; may perverted eloquence ever find so able an opposer.—Mr. Fox and the rights of Juries, in substance as well as form.—Mr. Grattan, and the minority of the Irish House of Commons.

—The literary characters, who have vindicated the Rights of Man, and may genius ever be employed in them.—May all Governments be those of the Laws, and all Laws those of the People.—May the free nations of the world vie with each other in promoting liberty, peace, virtue, and happiness among men.—The encreased, encreasing, and sacred flame of Liberty.—Ireland.—The cause of freedom.—The memory of John Locke.—The memory of William Molyneux.—The memory of Dr. Franklin.—The memory of Mirabeau.—The memory of Dr. Price.—The memory of Mr. Howard.

#### COPY OF THE ADDRESS

##### *TO THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF FRANCE:*

IT is not from vanity or ostentation, that we, the citizens of Belfast, and citizen-soldiers of that town and neighbourhood, take the liberty of addressing the representative majesty of the French people — We address you, with the rational respect due to a title elevated far above all servile and idolatrous adulation, and with that affectionate fraternity of heart which ought to unite man to man, in a mutual and inseparable union of interests, of duties, and of rights; which ought to unite nation with nation, into one great republic of the world.

ON a day, sanctified as this has been, by a declaration of human rights, the germ of so much good to mankind, we meet with joy together, and wish well to France, to her National Assembly, to her people, to her armies and to her King.

MAY you, legislators, maintain by the indefatigable spirit of liberty, that constitution which has been planned by the wisdom of your predecessors, and never may you weary in the work you have undertaken, until you can proclaim with triumphant security, it is finished! Manifest to an attentive and progressive world, that it is not the phrenzy of

philosophy, nor the fever of wild and precarious liberty, which could produce such continued agitation ; but that imperishable spirit of freedom alone, which always exists in the heart of man, which now animates the heart of Europe, and which in the event, will communicate its energy throughout the world, invincible and immortal !

WE rejoice in the sincerity of our souls, that this creative spirit animates the whole mass of mind in France. We auspicate happiness and glory to the human race, from every great event which calls into activity the whole vigour of the whole community ; amplifies so largely the field of enterprize and improvement, and gives free scope to the universal soul of the empire. We trust that you will never submit the liberties of France to any other guarantees, than God, and the right hands of the people.

THE power that presumes to modify or to arbitrate with respect to a constitution adopted by the people, is an usurper and a despot, whether it be the meanest of the mob, or the ruler of empires ; and if you condescend to negotiate the alteration of a comma in your constitutional code, France from that moment, is a slave. Impudent despots of Europe ! Is it not enough to crush human nature beneath your feet at home, that you thus come abroad to disturb the domestic settlement of the nations around you, and put in motion your armies, those enormous masses of human machinery, to beat down every attempt that man makes for his own happiness ?—It is high time to turn these dreadful engines against their inventors, and organized as they have hitherto been, for the misery of mankind, to make them now the instruments of its glory and its renovation.

SUCCESS, therefore, attend the ARMIES of France !

MAY your soldiers, with whom war is not a trade, but a duty, remember that they do not fight merely



for themselves, but that they are the advance guard of the world : nor let them imagine that the event of the war is uncertain. A single battle may be precarious, not so a few campaigns.—There is an omnipotence in a righteous cause, which masters the pretended mutability of human affairs, and fixes the supposed inconsistency of fortune. If you will be free, you *MUST* ; there is not a chance that one million of resolute men can be enslaved ; no power on earth is able to do it ; and will the God of justice and of mercy ? Soldiers ! there is something that fights for you even in the hearts of your enemies. The native energies of humanity, rise up in voluntary array against tyrannical and preposterous prejudice, and all the little cabals of the heart, give way to the feelings of nature, of country and of kind.

FREEDOM and prosperity to the people of France ! We think that such revolutions as they have accomplished, are so far from being out of the order of society, that they sprung inevitably from the nature of man and the progression of reason ; what is imperfect he has the power to improve ; what he has created, he has a right to destroy. It is a rash opposition to the irresistible will of the public, that in some instances has maddened a disposition, otherwise mild and magnanimous, turned energy into ferocity, and the generous and gallant spirit of the French, into fury and vengeance. We trust that every effort they now make, every hardship they undergo, every drop of blood they shed, will render their constitution more dear to them.

LONG life and happiness to the King of the French ! not the Lord of the soil and its servile appendages, but the King of men, who can reserve their rights, while they entrust their powers. In this crisis of his fate, may he withstand every attempt to estrange him from the nation ; to make him an exile in the midst of France, and to prevent him



from indentifying himself as a magistrate with the constitution, and as a Frenchman with the people.

WE beseech you all as men, as legislators, as citizens and as soldiers, in this your great conflict for liberty for France, and for the world, to despise all earthly danger, to look up to God, and to connect your councils, your arms, and your Empire to his throne, with a chain of union, fortitude, perseverance, morality and religion.

WE conclude, with this fervent prayer : That as the Almighty is dispersing the political clouds which have hitherto darkened our hemisphere, all nations may use the light of Heaven : that, as in this latter age, the Creator is unfolding in his creatures, powers which had long lain latent—they may exert them in the establishment of universal freedom, harmony and peace ; may those who are free, never be slaves : may those who are slaves be speedily free.

[ON the motion of Mr. Thomson, the above was to be transmitted to the National Assembly.]

#### COPY OF THE

#### ADDRESS TO THE PEOPLE OF IRELAND.

WE, the volunteers and other inhabitants of the town and neighbourhood of Belfast, assembled to commemorate this great day, embrace with earnestness the opportunity which it affords, at once to express our zeal and affection for the cause of liberty in France, and our undisguised opinions on subjects of the last importance to our native land.

TRAINED from our infancy in a love of freedom, and an abhorrence of tyranny, we congratulate our brethren of France and ourselves, that the infamous conspiracy of slaves and despots, against the happiness and glory of that admired and respected nation, and against the common rights of man, has hitherto proved abortive.

FIXING our view steadily on the great principle of Gallic emancipation, we will not be diverted from that magnificent object, by the accidental tumults or momentary ebullitions of popular fury. We will not estimate the wisdom of her legislators by the transports of a mob; nor the spirit of her armies by the cowardice of a regiment; nor the patriotism of her people by the treachery of individuals; nor the justice of her cause by the numbers of her enemies. We judge with other views and on other principles. We see with admiration, France extending the land-marks of human knowledge in the great art of government, and opening to the world new systems of policy and of justice. We see her renounce all wars on the principle of conquest. We see her propose an universal brotherhood and an eternal peace among the nations. We see her even now, when forced into arms and bloodshed, by the unjust and unprincipled machinations of her enemies, separating, as far as possible, the innocent subjects from the guilty despot; respecting, amidst the horrors of war, the property of individuals; and exempting from interruption the peaceful traffic of the merchant. It is from views like these, that we estimate that stupendous event, the Revolution, which we this day commemorate; not from accidental irregularities, which, while we condemn them, we are compelled to pity, as feeling that they spring not merely from a spirit of licentiousness, but from a sense of injury working on a sanguine people, still galled with the recollection of recent tyranny and oppression, and jealous of liberty, but just recovered, and scarcely yet secure.

SUCH are our sentiments on the subject of the French Revolution;—we come now to the state of our own country.

IMPRESSED as we are with a deep sense of the excellence of our constitution, as it exists in *theory*, we rejoice that we are not, like our brethren in France, reduced to the hard necessity of tearing up

inveterate abuse by the roots, even where utility was so intermixed as not to admit of separation.—Ours is an easier and a less unpleasing task ; to remove with a steady and a temperate resolution, the abuses which the lapse of many years inattention and supineness in the great body of the people, and unremitting vigilance in their rulers to invade and plunder them of their rights, have suffered to overgrow and to deform that beautiful system of government, so admirably suited to our situation, our habits, and our wishes. We have not to innovate, but to restore. The just prerogatives of our Monarch we respect and will maintain. The constitutional power of the Peers of the realm we wish not to invade. We know that in the exercise of both, abuses have grown up ; but we also know that those abuses will be at once corrected, so as never again to recur, by restoring to us THE PEOPLE, what we, for ourselves, *demand as our right*, our due weight and influence in that estate, which is our property, the Representation of the People in Parliament.

THOROUGHLY impressed with the unjust and ruinous inequality of that representation, with the consequent corruption, which pervades all ranks in the state ; with the destruction of the morals, the sacrifice of the commerce, and the hourly and imminent danger to the liberty of our country, we will inflexibly persevere in the pursuit of that great remedy for all our political evils, a parliamentary reform ; a reform temperate, equal and just, which shall restore lustre to the crown, dignity to the peerage, and their due weight and influence to the people of Ireland.

BUT while we thus state our sentiments on the subject of reform, we feel it incumbent upon us to declare, as we now do, that no reform, were even such attainable, would answer our ideas of utility or justice, which should not equally include all sects and denominations of Irishmen. We reprobate and abhor the idea, that political inequality should result

from religious opinions ; and we should be ashamed, at the moment when we are seeking for liberty ourselves, to acquiesce in any system founded on the slavery of others.

WE have now declared our sentiments to the world. In declaring them we spurn with equal disdain, restraint, whether proceeding from a mob or a monarch ; from a riot or a proclamation. We look with a mixture of abomination and contempt on the transactions which, on the last anniversary of the French Revolution, degraded the national character of England ; when neither the learning, the piety, the public spirit, nor the private virtue of a Priestley, could protect him from the savage fury of the vilest of an ignorant and a bigoted rabble ; before whom the religion of the country was dishonoured, the name of the Sovereign insulted, and all law and order levelled in the dust ; to the disgrace, not less of the integrity of the magistrates who were the fomenters, than of the spirit of the people, who were timid witnesses of the ravage and destruction. As little should we respect any attempt, under colour of authority, to fetter down our minds or prevent the publication of our grievances, and our determination to seek redress. In the pursuit of reform, that great measure indispensable to the freedom, the happiness and the glory of our country, we will inflexibly persevere, and for its attainment we rely with confidence on the steadiness, the public spirit and the zealous co-operation of our countrymen.

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AT a meeting of the BELFAST VOLUNTEER COMPANY, (BLUE) 7th September, 1792,

Captain BROWN, in the Chair :

The following Resolutions were unanimously agreed to :

RESOLVED, That we are happy to see the present revival of volunteering throughout this province,

confident that the rights of the people are most secure when they are able to assert them.

THAT we are firmly persuaded that this country is indebted to the spirit and wisdom of the volunteers for whatever commerce or constitution it possesses, and that their success was owing to the justness of the principles on which they acted.

THAT we consider it necessary at this crisis for all volunteers to recur to those principles which have stood the test of time, and have become by their universal adoption, sacred and uncontrovertible.

THAT these principles are fully expressed in the resolutions of the first and third Dungannon meetings; and that a strict adherence to them by the old volunteer corps, and the adoption of them by every new corps, is essential to the welfare of Ireland.

THAT we again declare to our countrymen, and to the world, our firm determination to adhere to the principles contained in the resolutions of the first and third Dungannon meetings; and we warmly recommend it to every volunteer corps in the kingdom, the adoption of similar declarations.—United in sentiment, the volunteers will again become the happy instrument of producing essential benefits to the welfare of their country.

RESOLVED, That these resolutions be published in the Belfast news papers; and also in hand-bills; with the resolutions of the first and third Dungannon meetings prefixed, and be dispersed through this province.

Signed by Order,

JAMES Mc. CLEAN, Sec.

AT A MEETING OF THE

FIRST BELFAST VOLUNTEER COMPANY,

HELD AT THE DONEGALL-ARMS, SEPTEMBER 7, 1792;

MR. HUGH JOHNSON, IN THE CHAIR.

AT this important crisis, which is likely to form a remarkable æra in the history of man, when many of the European despots have combined to crush a



great nation struggling for liberty :—At a period when the spirit of volunteering seems to revive in this neighbourhood, we hope it will not be deemed presumptive in us, who first took up arms in the cause of our country, and who have never laid them down, nor slackened in our efforts to promote its prosperity, to declare the principles we hold, relative to the VOLUNTEER INSTITUTION OF IRELAND which we cannot do better than in the words of our own association, and in the following resolutions of the Dungannon meetings of February 1782, and September 1783 :—

(ASSOCIATION OF THE FIRST BELFAST VOLUNTEER CO)

‘ WE, whose names are hereunto subscribed, having  
 ‘ associated ourselves together, to learn the mili-  
 ‘ tary discipline, for defence of ourselves, this  
 ‘ town and country, and the support of the RIGHTS  
 ‘ of IRELAND, under the name of the FIRST  
 ‘ BELFAST VOLUNTEER COMPANY, do plight  
 ‘ our faith each to all, to be governed by the  
 ‘ voice of the majority in every case that may  
 ‘ arise; that we will not withdraw from the com-  
 ‘ pany from any other cause than removal or  
 ‘ bodily indisposition and that we will never ac-  
 ‘ cept of any wages or reward from government  
 ‘ as a volunteer company, or submit to take any  
 ‘ military oath or obligation therefrom.”

(DUNGANNON MEETING, FEBRUARY 15, 1782.)

- ‘ RESOLVED, that we hold the right of private  
 ‘ judgment in matters of religion, to be equally  
 ‘ sacred in others as in ourselves.
- ‘ RESOLVED, therefore, that as MEN, and as IRISH-  
 ‘ MEN, as CHRISTIANS, and as PROTESTANTS,  
 ‘ we rejoice in the relaxation of the penal laws  
 ‘ against our ROMAN CATHOLIC fellow subjects;  
 ‘ and that we conceive the measure to be fraught  
 ‘ with the happiest consequences to the UNION  
 ‘ and prosperity of the inhabitants of Ireland.’

(DUNGANNON MEETING, SEPTEMBER 8, 1783.)

- ‘ RESOLVED, that FREEDOM is the indefeasible  
‘ birth-right of IRISHMEN and BRITONS, de-  
‘ rived from the Author of their being; and of  
‘ which no power on earth, much less a delegated  
‘ power, hath a right to deprive them.
- ‘ RESOLVED, that THEY ONLY are FREE, who  
‘ are governed by no laws but those to which  
‘ they assent, either by themselves in person, or  
‘ by their representatives freely chosen, subject  
‘ to the controul, and frequently returning into  
‘ the common mass of constituents.
- ‘ RESOLVED, that the majority of our House of  
‘ Commons is NOT chosen by the PEOPLE.’

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RESOLVED unanimously, that the foregoing asso-  
ciation and resolutions, form the basis of our creed  
as citizen-soldiers.

RESOLVED unanimously, that the foregoing re-  
solutions, passed at the Dungannon meetings—adopt-  
ed by the whole volunteer army, and by most of the  
counties in Ireland—we look upon as a standard, by  
which to judge who are, and who are not, volun-  
teers upon principle: And that we will not associate,  
or be reviewed with any, if any there be, who are  
formed on principles opposite thereto.

RESOLVED unanimously, that we will perse-  
vere in the pursuit of an adequate representation of  
the Irish nation in Parliament, without distinction on  
account of religious opinions.

RESOLVED unanimously, that, venerating order,  
and abhorring licentiousness, we will be ever ready,  
as we have heretofore been, to support the Ma-  
gistrate in the execution of the law, in this neigh-  
bourhood.

Signed, by order of the First Belfast Volunteer Co.

HU. JOHNSON, CHAIRMAN.

RESOLVED unanimously, that these resolutions be  
published in each of the Belfast newspapers.

JOHN RABB, SEC.

BELFAST, OCTOBER 2, 1792.

AT A MEETING OF THE  
FIRST SOCIETY OF UNITED IRISHMEN,

MR. T. MILLIKEN IN THE CHAIR :

The following Declaration was unanimously agreed to, and ordered to be published :

THE right of petitioning, that sacred claim of those who suffer, is a natural right which municipal law neither gives nor can take away. Every age, and nation, has recognized it. It has been consecrated in these realms under the sanction of common and statute law ; and it is exerted in Turkey under the sabre of despotism. With respect to the manner of preferring complaint, it would have become those Grand Juries who have confederated against the common right of the subject, to point out any mode by which three millions of people could express their grievances more peaceably than by delegation.

ATTACHED as we are to one favourite principle—the good of the whole—the greatest happiness of the many, it is neither petty political scandal, nor peremptory dictation, nor the throng of names, and chorus of corporations, which can divert us from the unity and integrity of our political faith. To render authority either secure or permanent, it must be established in the affections of the whole people, and we have no scruple in declaring, that without some share of POLITICAL POWER, no people, nor any class of people, can have any security for their personal freedom, their property, their trade, or their religion. It is so with Protestants—It must be so with Catholics. The self same principle which makes the former call for a reform, makes the latter anxious for the elective franchise, as a shield from oppression ; and that principle we venerate, whether lodged in the bosom of a Protestant or a Catholic, an African or an American. To circumscribe liber-

ty is to destroy it; and without free circulation, like the air we breathe, it loses its spring, stagnates, corrupts, and then issues out from the grand jury rooms, hot and pestiferous, to check the rising prospects of the nation, and to blast the glories of 1782.

As for us, we disclaim, we abhor the idea of establishing a sovereignty over our fellow-citizens. We refuse any share in an ascendancy which claims exclusive and eternal dominion, surmounts law and legislature, and cuts off, with merciless proscription, a whole people from all hope of political equality. The law, in every free country, ought to know no exceptions; but to make the exceptions more general than the rule, is monstrous; and with concern we say, it is Irish policy.

WE, who in 1782, pledged our lives and fortunes to gain sovereignty to Ireland, will not, at this day, subscribe to the sovereignty of any party, who under the pretext of religion, disguise political jealousy and the selfishness of monopoly; nor will we dress up any such proud assumption with the attributes of royalty, and with the spoils of our countrymen.—We, who in the hour of danger, and in the face of the enemy, were glad to take the Catholics into our ranks, will not now throw them off as noxious incumbrances, and belying the nature and end of the volunteer institution, blaspheming the writ of Duggan, set ourselves in array against the very men, whom, the other day, we embraced as brothers.

WE who have always asserted the honour, the interest, and internal independence of Ireland to be maintainable only by the freedom, frequency, and power of Parliament, will not complement the abuses of the constitution at the expence of the community; nor will we, with heroic indifference to consistency pledge life and fortune to the support of a political system in all its branches, while resolutions still tingle in our ears, that without adequate reform, there is no salvation for Ireland.—Nor, finally, will we add ourselves to the train of

those upstarts in office, who acquire character and importance abroad, in the same proportion as their country is losing both at home; who swell into unnatural significance by civil dissention, and whose haughtiness encreases with, and by, national humiliation. We follow that excellent man whose personal glory is bound up with that of his country—who in this great question, rises above the sordid atmosphere of party, and we beseech him and his liberal coadjutors, tho' they may, for a time, be unsuccessful, to go on and complete the redemption of a long suffering people.

WE have resolved, and we keep our resolution. We have chosen, and we pursue our choice. We act honestly, and therefore conclude that we think justly. Let the law judge of our actions, but for our faith we appeal unto God—the God of all mankind, in whose presence there is no ascendancy but that of virtue and justice—distinction of religion, like distinction of colours, is of his ordination. We will never vilify the religion of any man, and far less will we presume to make those varieties of faith, which are perhaps natural and necessary, the engines of civil persecution and political usurpation.

(Signed by order of the Society)

JAMES HYNDMAN, SECRETARY.

AT A MEETING OF THE  
THIRD SOCIETY OF UNITED IRISHMEN,  
IN THE TOWN OF BELFAST—3D OCTOBER, 1792.  
*MR. CLOTWORTHY BIRNIE*

IN THE CHAIR:

The following Declaration was agreed to, and ordered to be published :

ASSOCIATED as we are, for the purpose of producing union of interest and affection among all the inhabitants of Ireland, we abhor the idea of withholding from our Roman Catholic brethren their



civil and religious rights, at the time that we would wish to enjoy those rights ourselves.

WE are persuaded that the religion of any man, and his politics, are not necessarily connected: On the contrary, that the former ought not to have any connection with the latter. In a civil view, there undoubtedly is a communion of interests and rights, and that every individual who contributes to the support of the state, ought to have a voice in framing the laws which regulate that state. But religion is personal; the individual alone accountable; we therefore deem it impious to intrude between his conscience and that Almighty Being, who alone knoweth his heart.

WE assert, that the right of petitioning in the subject, of whatever denomination, is not only natural, but perfectly agreeable to the spirit of our constitution; and we confess ourselves ignorant of any mode by which our Catholic brethren could have so peaceably collected, and expressed their sentiments, as by delegation.

WE have seen of late the publications of Grand Juries, which ought to have contained mild and peaceable sentiments, illiberal and ungenerous; directly calculated to sow dissention, and keep up that religious animosity which has so long distracted this island, and subjected it to the ridicule of a foreign administration.—Persevere, Catholic brethren! constitutionally persevere!—The cause in which you are engaged is natural and virtuous. A cause in which the Catholic and Protestant are equally involved; and whether opposed by wicked administrations, or by silly corporations, whose understandings and hearts are equally frozen, whilst there exists an almighty and righteous Ruler, your exertions will be crowned with success. Our endeavours shall never be wanting to attain the much desired object; and we trust the day will speedily arrive, when Catholic and Protestant, Mahometan and Jew, over the whole world, shall equally enjoy the sacred blessings of freedom and of peace.

DAVID BIGGAR, SECRETARY.

AT A MEETING OF THE  
BELFAST SECOND SOCIETY OF UNITED IRISH-  
MEN;

GEORGE-INN, TUESDAY, OCT. 9, 1792.

The following declaration having been laid before them, by their committee, was unanimously agreed to, and ordered to be published :

ASSOCIATED on the principles of humanity, and zealous for her rights, we view with generous indignation, the combinations of despots, to keep her in degradation, and suppress the voice with which she attempts to recite her sufferings and prefer her claims—Whether those despots be decorated with diadems, arrayed in the livery of a hunting club ; or the petty tyrants of the country, assembled in a jury room, their principles and object are the same in themselves, and to us equally detestable. While we reflect with regret, on the success of despotism in Poland, and execrate with horror its attempts in France, we cannot be insensible to its presumption and audacity in our native land, and the injustice and cruelty which it proposes to perpetuate. We have long seen, and seen with pity, three millions of our brethren degraded from the rank of citizens, and languishing in slavery.—We have seen the same three millions peaceable and submissive to, and scrupulously amenable to the laws of their country—their haughty Lords.—Nay, we have seen them forgetful of themselves, their injuries and their insults, armed for the defence of the ungrateful minions who vilify their characters, insult Heaven by pronouncing them incapable of the rights of men, and pledge their lives and fortunes to keep them, and their posterity, in eternal thralldom.

CAPTIVATED with this unparalleled magnanimity, and founding our judgments on the solid basis of character, approved by experience, we pronounced

those three millions of our Catholic brethren not only capable of citizenship, but worthy of its blessings—On this foundation, as men of integrity, we pledged ourselves to our country, and each other, to use our utmost influence to remove the stigma from their character, and the slavery from their persons, of which they have so long and so justly complained, and restore them to a community of privileges and interest, and consequently of affection with their brethren.

WE now declare, that we are neither ashamed of our judgment nor sorry for our conduct. The foundation of the one appears more solid, and the propriety of the other more conspicuous, every day. The dignified moderation, the legal precision, generous ardor, and unawed magnanimity of their procedure, demonstrate that they are worthy of our friendship and the freedom of their country.—Of that friendship we solemnly assure them, in its utmost extent—and we trust the period is at hand, when the wisdom of the legislature will justify our judgment, sanction the propriety of our conduct, and realize our prospects.

WHILE we thus repeat the avowal of our friendship, and express our trust, we declare at the same time, that the honor, prosperity, peace and happiness of our country, are our great object, and a regard to these our leading principle. Of these, we know, identity of interest, equality of privilege, and harmony of affection, form the only solid base. Neither house nor kingdom, divided against itself, can possibly stand. We, therefore, disclaim all connection with, and attachment to, party or cabal. We reprobate with indignation, the idea of an ascendancy, whose imaginary height depends upon depressing brethren, and plunging them in the depths of servitude and wretchedness. We wish to prevent the ascendancy, whatever it is, in its true elevation, by restoring all around to its proper level. Nay, we wish to secure to our countrymen, not

excepting venal burgesſes, ſelf devoted jurors, and other reſolutioners, who volunteer in the cauſe of human degradation— thoſe very lives and properties, which they have ſo raſhly pledged themſelves, wantonly to throw away.

LASTLY, we declare to you, our Catholic brethren, that we are fully convinced of the juſtice of your claims, and the legality of your proceedings. Your right of petitioning all or any of the branches of the legiſlature, is unaniſmouſly ſanctioned by the voice of common ſenſe, the laws of the land, and the practice even of deſpotiſm. Go on, then, generous, though degraded men ! Liberty is your object ; and ye have long deſerved it ! Let the love of liberty be your principle, the law your guide, and unanimity your ſupport ! Miniſters may frown, courtiers intrigue, and juries fulminate proſcriptions without end. Be not afraid of them, neither be ye diſconcerted. Their frown is inſignificance, their intrigues fooliſhneſs, and their fulminations, like the ſhowman's ſlaſh, from pounded roſin, are only the amuſement, or the terror of children. All theſe will ſpeedily diſappear. Your voice, preferring the claims of juſtice, and ſupported by reaſon and ſound policy, muſt, and will be heard. “ The night of political ignorance, deluſion, and ſuperſtition, is far ſpent ; and the day is at hand.”—The day, which ſhall raiſe you to the dignity of men, and your country to a name among nations. We look forward to its appearance with ardent expectation, and ſhall hail its preſence with hallowed joy. We recognize you with ſympathy as brethren, diſinherited, proſcribed, and alienated, in your native land.

WE have pledged ourſelves to ſupport your claims of reſtoration to your natural rights, and we will be faithful to our word.

IN this cauſe, we ſtand not alone. The brighteſt ornaments of the ſenate and the bar, the wiſe and

liberal in every corner of the land, and above all, the eternal principles of reason and justice are mustered on our side. Thus supported, we may be disappointed for a season, but cannot despair. We repeat, " your voice must, and will be heard : " Your prayers granted, and your rights restored. The day which shall enrol you in the ranks of fellow-subjects, will give security to the liberties of Irishmen, nerves to their industry, and honor to their name. Till that day, we must continue, as we are, a weak, wretched, and insulted people.

WM. OSBORNE, CHAIRMAN.

WM. MITCHELL, SECRETARY.

AT A MEETING OF THE  
FOURTH SOCIETY OF UNITED IRISHMEN

OF BELFAST, OCTOBER, 19, 1792 ;

MR. EDWARD KELLY, IN THE CHAIR ;

The following declaration was unanimously agreed to, and ordered to be published :

IMPRESSED with benevolent sentiments towards all the human kind, we lament, at this great æra of reform, that there should exist Irishmen, who, living under the enjoyment of constitutional privileges, wish to debar their fellow-subjects of the same rights.

CONNECTED as we are with another country, whose aggrandizement has been the destruction of Ireland, we view with astonishment and abhorrence, the weak policy of these men, who, from whatever motives, wish to prevent the UNION of IRISHMEN.

WE are satisfied that every individual, in whatever country, and of whatever persuasion, has an equal, natural right in the blessings of the state in which he lives ; we regret that any part of our fellow-subjects should be deprived of those blessings ;



—and we do sincerely lament that Protestants, whether under the garb of religion or policy, should even dare to wish for a continuation of such slavery.

WE congratulate our Catholic brethren, on the appearance of that happy period, when the general interests of this island will be the only object in view among all its inhabitants; when Catholic and Protestant will be mutually concerned in one common cause; when religious opinions shall no longer debar a subject from the enjoyment of civil rights.

THE just claim which every subject has, to prefer his petition to the legislature, for a redress of those grievances under which he labours, we believe, need not now be disputed. We admire the wisdom and modesty of our Catholic brethren, in the mode which they adopted of preferring this claim; and we feel ourselves peculiarly happy in assuring them of our uniform co-operation, and decided support in the attainment of an object that so much concerns the general good.

SOME late publications no further merit our attention, than by urging us to declare our utter abhorrence of the sentiments they contain, in order to dissuade weak minds from adhering to such assertions, to force men to think for themselves, unfettered by grand juries or corporations—to act a just part, and leave the consequence to the Supreme Disposer of events.

AT this remarkable period, we do most heartily rejoice with all the friends of liberty, at the downfall which tyranny has received in France—a downfall, natural indeed!—in which the inhabitants of Ireland as well as France, are interested; and we hail that happy day, when despotism, under whatever mask, over the whole earth will receive a similar fate—and the standard of liberty be erected in its stead.

ISRAEL MILLIKEN, Sec.

## BELFAST VOLUNTEERS.

BY command of the committees of our respective corps, jointly convened by summons, we request the attendance of all their members in full uniform, at the White Linen-Hall, to-morrow, precisely at 12 o'clock, for the purpose of expressing their joy at the success of the arms of the French Republic, by firing three feu-de-joies.

THE volunteers request the attendance of their fellow-citizens, at the Donegall-Arms, at seven o'clock said evening, to join with them in declaring their sentiments on this auspicious event.

Monday, 29th October, 1792.

HU. MILWAIN, Sec. Belfast Troop.

JOHN RABB, Sec. First Belfast Vol. Com.

JAMES M'CLEAN, Sec. Belfast Vol. Com.

## BELFAST—NOVEMBER 2—1792.

AGREEABLY to a late advertisement, the successes of the French were celebrated on Tuesday by the volunteers and citizens of Belfast, with that warmth of affection which they generally display in every good cause.

THE two volunteer artillery companies, and the two infantry corps, assembled about two o'clock, and fired three feu-de-joyes, in honour of the day, on which a Duke and a King, at the head of an armed host, ingloriously deserted the field, after a campaign which, both in point of design and execution, was as disgraceful to the arms of Austria and Prussia, as its object was detestable and unjust.

IN the evening a numerous meeting was held at the Donegall-Arms, consisting of volunteer citizens, and citizens unarmed, in pursuance of an advertisement requesting an assembly of the inhabitants—when the following declaration was unanimously agreed to :

MR. SAM. MC. TIER IN THE CHAIR :

WE, the inhabitants of Belfast, with hearts overflowing with joy, again assemble together, publicly to declare our happiness at the glorious success of the French arms, against innumerable hosts of enemies—the enemies of the human race—and their final expulsion from the Gallic territories : An event by which every obstacle to the compleat establishment of civil and religious liberty, is removed from that hallowed land—an event which secures liberty to surrounding nations.

SANGUINE as our opinions were of the invincible power of a nation of freemen, opposed to the armed slaves of tyrants, yet the event has surpassed our fondest expectations.

WHEN we contemplate the treachery of the executive power, the perfidy of officers, the disorganized state of the army—when we consider the combination of formidable enemies, with generals of the first military abilities at the head of veteran troops, yet observe, that these armies have not been capable of achieving a single important object, credibility is almost staggered, but the world has witnessed it. We cannot help attributing the success of the French arms to the signal interposition of the Deity, as an example of the success with which he will crown the efforts of mankind, in every attempt to establish civil and religious liberty ; and we fervently implore the influence of the Divine Spirit, to guide the councils of the National Convention in perfecting the great work in which they are engaged, so as to render it productive of happiness to millions yet unborn.

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THE town was almost universally illuminated.—Every thing demonstrated sincere pleasure in the disgrace of two tyrannical courts, that attempted to dragoon an united nation into that deplorable state of spiritual well as political bondage, from which

it was just recovering ; and that dared to tell twenty-five millions of men—YE SHALL NOT BE FREE.

IN the windows of six or seven houses a number of transparencies presented themselves :—a few of the mottoes are subjoined, as trifling circumstances sometimes mark the disposition of the times.

PERFECT union and equal liberty to the men of Ireland.—Vive la Republique : Vive la Nation.—Church and State Divorced.—Liberty Triumphant.—The Rights of Men established.—Despotism prostrate.—The Tyrants are fled ; let the People rejoice.—Heaven beheld their glorious efforts, and crown'd their deeds with success.—France is free ; so may we ; let us will it.—Awake O ye that sleep.—A gallows suspending an inverted Crown, with these words :—“ May the fate of every Tyrant be that of Capet.”—A check to Despots.—The Cause of Mankind triumphant.—Irishmen rejoice.—Union among Irishmen.—Rights of Man.—Irishmen ! look at France.—Liberty and Equality.

#### IRELAND.

8th Sept. 1783.—Armed Citizens spoke.

2d Dec. 1783.—Their Delegates ran away.

30th Oct. 1792.—We are taxed, tyth'd, and enslaved, but we have only to unite and be free.

#### FRANCE.

14th July, 1789.—Sacred to Liberty.

10th August, 1792.—The People triumphant.

22d October, 1792.—Exit of Tyranny.

THE night closed in the most orderly manner, without either bonfire or any kind of irregularity whatever.

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#### NOTHERN WHIG CLUB.

AT a general meeting on the 5th of November, held pursuant to notice, the following Resolutions were agreed to :

ARCH. H. ROWAN, ESQ. IN THE CHAIR :

RESOLVED, That it is with the greatest satisfaction we embrace this opportunity to congratulate our country on the late ignominious flight of the enemies to liberty, from the territory of the French Republic ; and to express our hopes, that the present disturbances in that country may speedily terminate in the stable tranquillity of a good Government, founded on the principles of equal liberty, and the unalienable rights of man.—(Unanimously.)

RESOLVED, That as an early acquiescence in the just demands of the people is the surest pledge of peace and tranquillity in any country, we trust we shall speedily see the wishes of this nation complied with, by an honest and effectual reform in the representation of the people, on a broad principle of equal justice and equal liberty to all sects and denominations of Irishmen ; satisfied as we are that a sincere union among ourselves, and a total oblivion of past dissensions, from whatever cause arising, can alone secure to this country, freedom, happiness, and prosperity.—(One dissentient.)

RESOLVED, That we see with the greatest satisfaction the rapid decay of prejudice and bigotry in the part of the country most immediately within our observation ; and we anticipate with pleasure the day of their total downfall.—(Unanimously)

WM. SINCLAIRE,  
SECRETARY.

BELFAST VOLUNTEER COMPANY (BLUE).

AT a meeting of the Belfast Volunteer Company (Blue), at the Exchange, November 24, 1792,

LIEUT. GETTY IN THE CHAIR :

[The packets having this day brought the glorious intelligence, of the French having obtained the possession of Brussels, the capital of the Austrian



Netherlands—and thereby having virtually completed the liberation of the Belgic people.]

THE company unanimously agreed to publish the following declaration of their sentiments, upon that great event:—

AGAIN has LIBERTY triumphed—again have her sons conquered—and again we rejoice. We rejoice that another great country is FREE—and that in Belgia, we are now able to recognize a NATION OF FREEMEN.

WE congratulate our countrymen on the good news; and we hail it as a certain pledge and forerunner of that reform in parliament, which will procure to the people their due weight in the legislature of this country. Already corruption trembles—and, ere long, at the UNITED VOICE OF THE PEOPLE, she must depart the land. Now is the time for Irishmen to banish prejudice, and to embrace each other as brethren—the children of the same God. Forgetting past errors, let them strive in future, to promote the happiness of every religious sect and denomination; and their country must be free and flourishing.

JAMES M'CLEAN, Sec.

*REPLY TO THE SHEFFIELD AND BELFAST  
ADDRESSES.*

Answer of the President of the French Assembly, (Citizen Gregoire) to the Addresses of the Societies of Sheffield, and Belfast in Ireland.

Citizens of the world,

Your addresses to the representatives of the French nation, have filled them with pleasing emotions.—In imposing on me the honourable duty of a reply, they make me regret that I can but imperfectly express, what all with so much energy feel. To have the honour to be an English or a Frenchman, carries

with it a title to every degree of mutual affection that can subsist among men.

THE curious in your country are pleased to traverse the globe in order to explore nature ; henceforth they can visit Montblanc (Savoy) without quitting France ; in other words without leaving their friends. The day on which free Savoy unites itself with us, and that on which children of high minded England appear among us, are, in the eye of reason, days of triumph. Nothing is wanting in these affecting scenes, but the presence of all Great Britain, to bear testimony to the enthusiasm with which we are inspired by the name of liberty and that of the people with whom we are about to form eternal alliance.

THE National Convention has wished to testify its satisfaction to the English, in decreeing that they would conduct in the presence of some of them the trial of the last of their Kings. Sixty ages have elapsed since Kings first made war on liberty : the most miserable pretexts have been sufficient for them to spread trouble over the earth. Let us recollect with horror that under the reign of Ann, the falling of a pair of gloves, and that under Louis XIV. a window opening from one apartment into another, were sufficient causes for deluging Europe in blood.

ALAS ! short is the duration prescribed by eternal power to our weak existence ; and shall then the ferocious ambition of some individuals embitter or abridge our days, with impunity ? Yet a little moment, and despots and their cannons shall be silenced ; philosophy denounces them at the bar of the universe ; and history, sullied with their crimes, has drawn their characters. Shortly the annals of mankind will be those of virtue ; and in records of France, a place will be reserved for our testimonies of fraternity with the British and Irish societies ; but especially for the Constitutional Society of London.

DOUBTLESS the new year, which is now approaching, will see all your rights restored. The

( 95 )

Butchers	-	-	87
Bakers	-	-	40
Barbers	-	-	28
Coopers	-	-	163
Carpenters	-	-	68
Cabinet-makers	-	-	22
Chandlers	-	-	27
Hatters	-	-	18
Hofiers	-	-	7
Mafons	-	-	48
Nailors	-	-	27
Painters	-	-	9
Ropers	-	-	20
Reedmakers	-	-	6
Shoemakers, two of them females,			224
Saddlers	-	-	14
Sawyers	-	-	26
Smiths	-	-	78
Staymakers	-	-	6
Taylor's	-	-	65
Tanners and Curriers		-	33
Weavers, one of them a female,			389
Watchmakers	-	-	14
Wheelwrights	-	-	9
Sundry other trades		-	166
Tobacco Spinners, (giving employ- ment to 152 children of both fexes.)			38
Publicans under licence for fpirits and ftiong beer, being one to every 16th houfe.			119

By the above it appears the town and suburbs were increased since 1st Jan. 1757, being 25 years, nearly one half; the following being the then state of the same :

1779 Houses, containing  $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} 7993 \\ 556 \end{array} \right\}$  Protestants,  
Roman Catholicicks.

( 96 )

There were at that period, 399 looms, and 1800 people able to bear arms.

Increase in houses is 247

Ditto in Inhabitants 4556

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IN 1791.

Number of the Inhabitants, &c. in the Town and Suburbs of Belfast, taken at Midsummer, 1791, by the same Person.

2909 houses occupied.

198 do. untenanted, chiefly new houses.

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3107 Containing 8932 males.

9388 females.

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In all, 18,320

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There are 522 looms employed at cotton.

129 do. at cambrick and linen.

28 do. at sail cloth.

16 do. at stockings.

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695 looms in all.

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There were 229 spinning jennies, from 25 to 100 threads, which draw 15,273 threads of cotton, or nearly 67 threads each on an average.

Out of the above there is the following number of each trade, &c. viz.

Butchers	-	-	39
Bakers	-	-	67
Barbers	-	-	30
Coopers	-	-	115
Carpenters	-	-	169
Cabinet-makers	-	-	40
Chandlers	-	-	29
Hatters	-	-	38
Hobers	-	-	16
Masons	-	-	68
Nailors (one female)	-	-	41

Painters	-	-	17
Ropers	-	-	35
Reed-makers	-	-	6
Shoe-makers (two females)	-	-	312
Saddlers	-	-	22
Sawyers	-	-	37
Smiths	-	-	69
Staymakers	-	-	15
Tailors (one female)	-	-	100
Tanners and Curriers	-	-	45
Weavers (six females)	-	-	679
Watchmakers	-	-	22
Wheelwrights,	-	-	6
Sundry other trades	-	-	220

Tobacco Spinners, giving employment  
to 20 children of both sexes, (decrease  
in  $9\frac{1}{2}$  years, including children em-  
ployed, 165 : the consequence of  
impolitic revenue laws) } 5

Publicans under licence for spirits and  
strong beer, being one to every 17th  
house : a great number of them per-  
sons who have trades } 167

By the above it appears, the town and suburbs were  
increased in less than 10 years,

Houses	-	1,081
Inhabitants	-	5,215

As BALLYMACARRET is only separated from the  
town of Belfast by the Long Bridge, the following  
view of its progressive improvement is given :

In 1781.

Houses	96
Males	195
Females	224
	<hr/> 419

In 1791.

Houses	279
Males	596
Females	612
	<hr/> 1,208

Resolutions, dated 12 December, by a Club styled  
Jacobins, are omitted.



( 98 )

AT A MEETING OF THE  
FIRST BELFAST VOLUNTEER COMPANY,

DECEMBER 18, 1792,

WILLIAM TENNENT, IN THE CHAIR.

THE FOLLOWING ADDRESS WAS UNANIMOUSLY AGREED TO.

*TO THE VOLUNTEERS OF IRELAND.*

FELLOW SOLDIERS,

YOUR COUNTRY IS IN DANGER !

THE period of a few fleeting months has scarcely elapsed, since the First Belfast Volunteer Company, impressed with the interesting situation of this island, and the extraordinary increase of its armed citizens, did publish to the world, *ANEW*, their sentiments concerning the volunteer institution—a dignified and most honourable institution, in whose lists should be found enrolled the names of *ALL* the virtuous inhabitants of Ireland. We, who in the hour of danger, and in the face of the enemy, took up arms in defence of our country, when left to its own energy, by an abandoned and imbecile administration ; We, who have received the unanimous thanks of every branch of the legislature, did not imagine, that the arm of power would ever be uplifted in this land, to suppress the revival of our laudable associations.

WHEN the right of the people to appear in arms is called in question, by a proclamation of the Lord Lieutenant and Privy Council of Ireland ; when the exercise of this right is branded with the epithets, *illegal* and *sedition*—when menacing preparations by land and sea, indicate the near approach of war ; and when false and malicious reports are industriously circulated, with a view of spreading jealousies and discontents ; we call upon you to be firm !—to persevere !—to unite !

THE union of the people now makes despots tremble in foreign lands. It is to union Ireland must owe its salvation : the want of union, ten years

since, rendered abortive all your efforts for emancipation.

OUR fellow soldiers of Dublin, are charged with assembling "to withstand lawful authority, and violently and forcibly to redress pretended grievances."—What! are the grievances of which the people complain, only "pretended ones?" Is seeking a restoration of our rights—a reform in the representation of the people in parliament, an attempt to subvert the constitution? We say, no! it is to restore it.

UNDER these circumstances, we esteem it our duty to make a further declaration of our principles and opinions.

WE associated for the defence of ourselves, this town and country, and for the support of the rights of Ireland. We say, that it is the right of the people to be represented in parliament—taxation without representation is oppression—that the people are not represented—that parliament is not as it ought to be, an emanation from the people—that the grievances under which the people labour are almost innumerable and intolerable:—But we add, that a real and radical reform in the representative branch of the legislature, would restore the people to their due weight in the government of the country, and every lesser evil would quickly vanish.

THESE are our opinions;—neither proclamations nor threats shall deter us from the pursuit of our rights.—Our desire is peace; the welfare of our country, of our families, of our friends, require it of us. Let those who, by resisting the united voice of a nation, drive the people into extremities, be alone answerable to God and their country, for the consequences.

FELLOW-SOLDIERS!—Unite!—encrease your numbers and improve your discipline!—a people aspiring to be free, should be able to protect liberty. An armed nation can never be made slaves. Persevere! and our country must be saved!

WILLIAM TENNENT, CHAIRMAN.

JOHN RABB, SECRETARY.

## TOWN MEETING.

WE the subscribers, inhabitants of the town of Belfast, earnestly request the attendance of our fellow-citizens, at a general meeting of the town, at the market-house, on Wednesday next, the 26th inst. at noon, for the purpose of expressing our sentiments on the present state of public affairs; and to enter into such other measures as may be deemed expedient for the accomplishing that great object—an equal representation of the people in parliament.

Belfast, December 19, 1792.

C. Ranken	Robert Davis	Wm. Magee
Wm. Brown	Robert Thomson	John Cuming
Cunn. Greg	Will. Sinclair	Wm. Tennent
Alex. Orr	Robert Getty	Thomas Brown
Will. Stevenson	Alex. Mitchell	John Boyle
Jas. Ferguson	John Holmes	Thos. Sinclair
John Macartney	John Brown	Sam M'Tier
Sam. Thompson	Alex. Gordon	Henry Haslett.
James Holmes	John Robinson	

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 COPY OF AN ADDRESS

To the Delegates for Parliamentary Reform, in Scotland, unanimously agreed to by the Second Society of United Irishmen, of Belfast; and recommended to the other Societies of this town, to be sent as the joint address of the four Societies; which was accordingly done, in December, 1792.

ASSOCIATED for the purpose of promoting union among Irishmen, restoring three millions of brethren to the rights of citizenship, and effectuating a radical and complete reform of parliamentary representation for the people of Ireland, we cannot behold, with indifference, the vivid glow of patriotism which brightens the face of other nations, and the irresistible elasticity, with which man, long bent down into a beast of burden, shakes off the

yoke of despotism and resumes his form erect, in neighbouring kingdoms. We exult in the triumph of humanity which regenerated Gaul exhibits; and the revival of the long-dormant valor, which made the Cæsars tremble, and in earlier times, filled Rome itself with suppliant mourners. We accompany with raptures, the steps of freemen traversing the montains of Savoy, erecting the standard of liberty on the strong holds of despotism, and uniting the great family of God in the bonds of fraternity. In the fruitful plains of Belgia we hail prospects equally grateful to the enlightened eye, and flattering to the liberal heart. The arm of despotism palsied—her hosts discomfited—her throne tottering to ruin—and her motley train of slaves and sycophants, with all her proud abettors, plunged in despair, or meditating, with fell revenge, a last convulsive struggle in her cause.

BUT our raptures and our triumphs might be ranked with the transports of children, did we dwell for ever, as with the stare of foolish wonder, on these the glories of another land; while even the fainter brightness which opens on our own, and sister kingdoms, shines unnoticed. Thank God! there too we see the light of political knowledge widely diffused; and the seeds of liberality vegetating with vigor in the genial warmth of restored fraternity, and united patriotism. With us, that knowledge hath already assumed the form of language, and, in humble respectful petition, presented the claims of a proscribed nation at the bar of the legislature. We are sorry to say these claims were not treated with deference, or decency. We were not discouraged, but reanimated by their rejection. The chaos of Irishmen, as by the voice of Omnipotence, was instantly moulded into a body, its members arranged, and the frame organized. Nor were vigor and harmony ever characterized in greater perfection, than in the representation of that body now exhibited in the metropolis of the kingdom.—

And as it reflects the image of the original, we *know* it will speak its voice—the people's voice!—the only “*Jure Divini*” Law of Nations!

WE know too, that voice *shall* be heard. Irishmen have willed it, and they *must* be free. The violations of their constitution, the perversion of its principles, the abuse of its powers, and the avowed influence of venality and corruption, must be swept away together; not, we hope, by the awful experiment of a contested Revolution—may Heaven avert the dreadful necessity! but, by a *voluntary, immediate, and radical Reform*.

WHILE this is the object of our desires, our actions, and our union, and we are unalterably determined, by peaceable and constitutional means, to obtain it, we reprobate the mean idea of enjoying it exclusively. Liberty is the desire of *all* nations! The birth right of *all* men! To preserve it, with watchful jealousy, is the first political duty! To recover it, when arrested by the hand of tyranny, the highest pinnacle of human glory. That all men may assert, reclaim, and enjoy it, is, therefore, the fervent prayer of our hearts!

THAT Scotland, for ages, the asylum of independence, and equally renowned in arms and arts; that Scotland, the modern nurse of literature and science, whose seminaries have supplied the world with statesmen, orators, historians, and philosophers; Scotland, whose penetrating genius, has forced its way into the repositories of nature, unveiled her hidden mysteries, and brought forward all her richest treasures for the healing of the nations! Scotland, where a Reid and a Beatty broke the spells of an annihilating philosophy, which had reduced the universe to a *shadowy idea*; who held her up to ridicule; and presented creation anew, in her native substantiality and solid glories; to the sight of all men! That this same Scotland should have so long forgotten her degraded state, as a nation, slept over her political insignificance, or silently acquiesced in



the mockery of a popular representation, among the senators of another people, hath long filled us with inexpressible astonishment. And, when we reflected on our relation of fellow-subjects, or, as our Catholic brethren have more properly denominated us, *fellow slaves!* and the more solemn ties of religion and blood by which many of us are connected with you, we candidly own our astonishment was not free from a mixture of regret : for, however humiliating our own situation may have been, the Protestants and reformed among us, in the scale of freedom, were much superior to the Scottish people.

WHAT your state, as a people, was, previous to the day which set upon your independence, and blotted your name from among the nations of the earth, we presume not to delineate. What your state, from that day, has been, and now is, we know, and ye, *the delegates for promoting a reform*, must feel. Delineation of it is, therefore, unnecessary. We only say—and we say it, with confidence, Scotland as a nation, or part of a nation, has no people ! *The idea therefore of a parliamentary representation of the Commons of Scotland is only a political fiction!* a fiction so bold, that we are astonished at the audacity, which first presumed to hold it out as a reality. And when we consider that a whole nation implicitly swallowed the *idea* as a *reality*, we cannot be surprized that the genius of a Hume should invert the position, and endeavour to impose the reality of the universe, upon a *credulous sceptical* world, as an idea only.

YOUR eyes, brother-friends of a reform, are now opened to the deception; your tongues are loosed, and your pens ready. While, with your eyes ye behold the necessity and importance of the political regeneration which you have united to promote, let your tongues make it familiar to the ears, and your pens present it to the eyes of your brethren, *whose fathers were a people*. We are assured of your abilities, your learning, and your elo-

quence ; your patriotism we doubt not ; and on your perseverance we rely with confidence. Nor can we suppose, for a moment, that ye will ever suffer the whisper of malice, or the frowns of office to deter you from your pursuit. It is worthy of men—worthy of you—And ye will not abandon it ! Ye will never disappoint your brethren by disgracing yourselves ! We know the conflict is arduous. But, where the public good is the end, and the means are legal, every step is safe ;---Success sure, tho' slow, and the reward immortal.

*(The above, it is believed, was only published in hand bills, and not in the newspapers.)*

#### TOWN MEETING.

AT a general meeting of the inhabitants of Belfast, convened by public advertisement, (for which see page 100) at the Town House, and for want of room, adjourned to Mr. Vance's Meeting-House, on Wednesday, December 26, 1792,

CHARLES RANKEN, IN THE CHAIR.

AT a period when the public mind is so much agitated—when the nation seems to be in a state of smothered war ;—we deem it the duty of every man who is a friend to his country, to peace and good order, to come forward and publicly avow his sentiments.

WE, therefore, declare, that after all we have heard and read about our glorious and happy constitution, we are so ignorant as not to be able to find what it is : We cannot, however, conceive, that if in any nation three-fourths of the inhabitants are absolutely excluded from all share in the legislature and only a very small part of the other fourth represented ; if the great majority, of what are called the representatives, be appointed arbitrarily, by a few individuals, for a long term of years, and not

accountable to the people ;—If places and pensions be multiplied for the purposes of corruption ;—if no responsibility be annexed to the great offices of state ; if taxes without end be levied off the people, and the nation involved in debt, for the purpose of purchasing votes to impose more taxes ; —If the honours of the peerage be brought to sale to raise funds for the same purposes ; if the surplus of the revenue, instead of being applied to lessen the national debt, be carried to another country, whether to bribe the representatives of the people there, or to pay German *butchers* for massacring the friends of freedom in France ; if the subject be deprived of the trial by jury, whether by penal statutes, by *revenue* or *game laws*, by *fiats* or by *attachments* :— We say—if any nation labours under those and innumerable other grievances, practised under colour of law---we are yet to learn what is the *glorious* and *happy* constitution of that nation : We do not hesitate to say—THEY ARE A NATION OF SLAVES !

WE declare, that a government by King, Lords and Commons, the Commons being a real representation of all the people, is the government which, if attainable without violence, we wish for and prefer ; that we do not wish for a revolution, deeming it the last measure of dire necessity—a measure to which no wise or good man would resort until every other means had been tried in vain—and being convinced that our present form of government, however defective, possesses the power, if it had the will, of reforming all abuses and remedying all defects without violence or commotion, and that such reform MUST take place whenever the UNITED voice of the people shall call for it.

AND we further declare our opinion, that if any persons in this kingdom be endeavouring to promote a revolution, it can only be those, who determined, to preserve till the last moment their system of corruption, their borough influence, their places and

their pensions, pertinaciously oppose every attempt towards a reform, thereby doing their utmost to produce public commotion and overthrow the government, by driving the nation to despair.—Infatuated mortals!—willfully and wickedly blind to future consequences!—and of whom it may be justly said, *Quem Deus vult perdere, prius dementat.*” Whom God determines to destroy, he first makes mad.

WE declare, that a radical reform in the representation of the people has long been, and still is, the great object to which all our wishes, all our endeavours tend, the object which we have pursued, and which we shall never cease to pursue until it is attained; that to attain it we shall think no sacrifice too much, no risk too great; and that no reform can ever be adequate or useful, satisfactory or just, unless ALL IRISHMEN, of every description, shall be equally and fairly represented.

RESOLVED, That, with the utmost deference for our countrymen in general, we would most respectfully suggest the propriety of county meetings and of PROVINCIAL CONVENTIONS, by delegations from parishes, cities and great towns:—a measure by which the united voice of all the men of Ireland would be drawn to a focus, all wild ideas exploded, a permanent chain of national communication formed, and the important business of the kingdom conducted with that dignity and energy which become a great nation, peaceably, but FIRMLY DEMANDING THEIR RIGHTS.

RESOLVED, That a committee of twenty one be now appointed, with full powers to correspond, in our name, with our fellow-citizens in all parts of this country, in all parts of this province; and in all parts of the other provinces; and in concert with them to pursue such measures as shall be deemed expedient for procuring such meetings and conventions:—That said committee have full power, (when they shall deem the time proper) to call, in

our name, a general meeting of the inhabitants of this parish, to appoint delegates to such meeting and convention, and also to call us together for the same purpose.

RESOLVED, THAT

C. Ranken	Samuel Neilson	Wm. Tennent
Robert Thomson	Revd. S. Kelburne	Robert Simms
John Holmes	Revd. P. Vance	Dr. M'Donnell
James Holmes	Hu. Montgomery	George Joy
Doctor White	Henry Hallett	Hu. Crawford
Jas. Ferguson	Robert Getty	Sam. Brown
Will Sinclair	Sam. M'Tier	John Boyle

be, and they hereby are, appointed a committee, for the above purposes.

RESOLVED—That our warmest thanks are justly due to the volunteers of Ireland—to the old associations and to the new corps formed and forming:—SOLDIERS OF LIBERTY!—we thank you!—BE FIRM!—increase your numbers—perfect your discipline—despise the fulminations of placéd and pensioned courtiers, and of guzzling corporations. Great is your merit! you preserved internal peace---you aided and supported the civil Magistrate in the execution of the laws---UNITE AND PERSEVERE! You saved your country from foreign invasion, and rescued her from foreign legislation---and should a contest for liberty ever become necessary, (which God avert) we trust you will rescue her from internal oppression.

RESOLVED, That a voluntary contribution be received from the inhabitants of this town, who, from age, infirmity, or other causes, are prevented from enrolling themselves among the volunteers, for the purpose of creating a military fund, to supply with ammunition and other necessaries, the volunteers already embodied and embodying in Belfast-- and that the committee this day appointed, be requested to take the trouble of receiving the same.



AND with great deference to our countymen, we beg leave to recommend the adoption of a similar measure.

CHARLES RANKEN, CHAIRMAN.

MR. RANKEN having left the chair, Mr. William Sinclair was unanimously called to it; and it was then Resolved, that the unanimous thanks of this meeting be given to the chairman for his readiness in taking the chair, and for the strict propriety of his conduct in it.

WILLIAM SINCLAIRE.

SAM. NEILSON, SECRETARY.

The following is an account of the meeting of the inhabitants of Belfast, on the subject of a Reform in Parliament, at which the foregoing resolutions were agreed to.

#### DEBATE.

THE meeting was one of the most numerous of the inhabitants of this town that we ever recollect. Charles Ranken, of Richmond Lodge, Esq. being unanimously called to the chair; the business was opened by Mr. ROBERT THOMSON.

HE observed, that we were called together to express our sentiments on the state of public affairs at this crisis—a crisis the most important and awful that had occurred in this country since the Revolution of 1688. Discontent pervaded the kingdom; the people felt grievances and wished them redressed; but many wild notions had been taken up about the mode of redress; that many talked of a revolution; many talked of liberty and equality, words little understood by some, and to which strange ideas were annexed; that if we could this day lay a foundation for pointing the attention of the public mind to a proper object and to that alone, the town of Belfast would do more service to the country, and acquire more honor to itself than it ever had done, or ever

might do again ; that we had no occasion for a revolution ; all grievances would be redressed by a parliamentary reform, and that might be obtained without violence, without anarchy.

To follow him thro' an excellent train of argument, which carried conviction to the understanding of every hearer, as much exceeds our ability as it would be inconsistent with the limits of this paper. With much force of thought, he pointed out the necessity that at present exists for declaring, what were the objects of the people. That the agitation of the public rendered it absolutely necessary, and for that purpose, as a part of the collective body, we were that day assembled. He drew a striking picture of the extreme difference between the former state of France, under its old Government, when the will of one man gave law to millions, and the state of this country. We have not, said he, here, like them, to tear up by the roots and overturn Government—we have not to subvert, but to reform. We had, he said, grievances, and enormous ones, that demanded immediate redress. He dwelt particularly on the words *liberty and equality*, as terms often misunderstood ; and went at large into the first principles of government, pointing out the alterations that take place in the change from the state of nature to that of civil society. Among the many wild notions that have been spoken of, nothing was more wild than those which arose from the improper use of the two words mentioned—words which by no means bore the meanings often affixed to them. He defined *liberty* as that state which afforded protection to all alike by equal laws, for the government and good of the whole community. With regard to *equality*, taken in its literal meaning, it was absurd, for it did not exist in nature. He threw the folly of an equalizing system into the following point of view : He computed the acres in Ireland at 11,000,000, near 3 of which were generally deemed either bog or mountain, useless for the purposes of hus-

bandry ; and the inhabitants of the kingdom at 4 millions. Suppose the other 8 millions divided, there are only 2 acres for each inhabitant ! The coin of Ireland was a good many years since estimated at about three millions, suppose it now to be five ; if equally divided, it would give 25s. to each ;—but that is impossible, for the moment insurrections began, every man who had money would either send it out of the kingdom or bury it in the earth, where probably much of it would never be found. As to all the other wealth of the nation, it would be in a great measure lost ; for no man would have use for it, no man could buy it. Could a man with two acres of land, and 25s. in money, buy a coach and six, or a fine house and its furniture ? Could he carry on manufactures with that capital ; or could he buy ships and export your produce and manufactures to foreign markets ? Would any man by such a partition acquire any thing worth contending for, or for which he would wish to throw his country into confusion, and deluge it with blood ? Surely no. But let us look a little farther—the spendthrift, the drunkard, the gambler, would not have their bad habits eradicated by two acres of land and 25s. in money ; they would quickly be gone ; the careful, sober, parsimonious class of men would acquire them ; here again is inequality, and a new partition must be made by a new commotion, and more bloodshed, to restore equality again ; and this without end. Who would not fly to the verge of the earth to avoid a country where such confusion reigned ?

In the interval of contention, trade and manufactures, the soul of industry and the spring of wealth, would be lost ; for the means of carrying them on would no more exist. From the instant of the establishment of a state of equality, (were it a possible case) from what we are, we should infallibly fall into a state of beggary, and become a nation of savages. He declared, that he preferred our government to every other, with an improved repre-

sentation ; but without it, any other was perhaps as good. Impressed with such ideas, he had drawn up a Declaration, which he would submit to the assembly, and which he hoped would produce an unanimous vote ; he accordingly read the whole, and afterwards moved it paragraph by paragraph, seconded by Mr. Wm. Sinclair.

It was moved by Mr. John Holmes, on coming to the third resolution, that the words “ *if attainable without violence,*” should be expunged, which led to some debate, but was at length negatived, with three or four voices for expunging.

MR. ROBERT GETTY said, that a Reform in Parliament was the utmost bound of his wishes, and if attained, he should as one rest contented. He confessed that the British Constitution, in its theory, was peculiarly adapted to the people, and perhaps better fitted for their present condition than a purer one. He went into the first principles of government, proving that it was an institution intended to promote the good of society. That society had a right to model or reform it as they pleased, and found most conducive to their interest. He stated a case, that if a people fairly appointed a convention for examining abuses crept into their government, and that the plan for its reformation had afterwards met the perfect sanction of those who appointed them to prepare it—in such a situation, a government that would pretend to oppose the general will, would be guilty of high treason against the state. If ever such a day should arrive, he would say as one that he should be found at his post, ready to do his duty to his country. He urged with much ability the wisdom of rallying round one point, round the constitution---as nothing could prevent the completion of our wish except a divided sentiment among ourselves. Let moderate men come forward---the public interest requires it: let us save the country from the miseries of convulsion by a reform. Let governors beware how by folly they commit this country; for if it

ever happened, it would perhaps be found that the beautiful frame of our government might be lost, and that neither the existence of a Prince, nor of sapient hereditary counsellors, would be thought essential to the vital principles of freedom.

MR. MONTFOAD said, there are four classes of people in this assembly to whom I wish to address myself; the first are those who by reason of their advanced age, or want of health, are unable to serve their country in person; they may do it much service by contributing to the cause in a pecuniary way. Unless you appear to be in earnest, and able to carry into execution what may be agreed on at your Convention, you will be spurned at by those who at present enjoy the power of ruling in this country. I therefore earnestly recommend, to such as cannot personally assist in this business, by reason of years and infirmities, and are rich, that a subscription be immediately opened to purchase arms, ammunition, and accoutrements. The second class of people, are those who once took up and carried arms in the cause of their country, but who have long laid them aside. Different causes may have operated upon the minds of different men to induce them to do so; many years have they stood idle, and left the task to others, who have laboured incessantly to emancipate their country. To those who were enrolled among their armed brethren, I recommend their immediately resuming their arms, and helping to liberate their country. The third class are those who are young enough, who enjoy good health, and who are rich enough to enable them to be volunteers, but, nevertheless, have not yet joined their brethren in arms, to those I recommend their losing no time ---the cause requires the exertions of all; these have as much at stake as others, I therefore entreat them to come forward and enrol themselves among their armed brethren.

THE fourth and last class are very different from those I have mentioned, these are the lower order of



the people, but who are the strength of the nation; by whose labour the whole are supported; these have their country's welfare as much at heart as the others, because on them falls the weight of many useless and burthensome taxes, which are again lavished away upon placemen and pensioners. This description of the people are willing to help to free their country but are not able. Their assistance is absolutely necessary, for the cause requires the union and force of the whole people. By reason of their poverty they are not able to arm or cloath themselves, nor to lose the necessary time requisite to obtain a proper degree of discipline. To enable them to do so should be applied a part of the subscriptions raised by the rich; help them also with your advice; they require the advice and instruction of those whose station and situation of life have been such as to enable them to acquire knowledge, experience and wisdom. Avoid being led with rashness into premature measures; be firm, but be not rash; for on the determined cool firmness of the *whole* people, does the success of your measures depend. The time is now arrived which requires the exertions of every individual of the community, in the several stations and situations in which they are able to act. You who are rich and not able to serve in person, contribute and contribute liberally to the cause, by enabling your poorer brethren to act. Ye who are poor come forward and you may and will be enabled to do much good, by the contributions of the rich being applied to assist you. And to you who are rich enough to arm and clothe yourselves, and whose age and health are such as make you eligible soldiers in the cause of your country; I hope you will all come forward at this crisis. Perhaps such another coincidence of circumstances may never come again. The cause in view is a glorious cause, the salvation of your country; be united, be firm, and in the end you must be successful.

COUNSELLOR SAMPSON supported the amendment, on the ground that it rendered the resolution more explicit.

REV. MR. KELBURN opposed the amendment, because he was convinced it could answer no valuable end. He said that as an individual he did not prefer the much boasted constitution ; he did not know whether there was really any such thing : he had heard of a government by King, Lords and Commons, but could never approve of hereditary legislators, because wisdom is not hereditary ; and he asked if security could be given for their inheriting hereditary wisdom, as well as hereditary titles—and granting that this could be done, and that Lords always inherit the wisdom of their progenitors, yet he could not see any right to hereditary legislation ; for it was supposed to be a fundamental principle of the British Constitution, as it is called, that the people cannot be taxed without being represented, and that it was as bad to be subject to other laws, *laws* affecting life, without being represented, as laws affecting property, for life is more valuable than property—all that a man hath will he give for his life.

BESIDES, Crown and Lords are two to one against the people in this supposed constitution, the Lords are created and creatable at pleasure by the Crown, and the Commons have been found at times very complaisant, so far so, as to give up the rights of the people for something to patch their old coats. The mover of the amendment had said, that it would be time enough to use the words proposed to be expunged, when a reform should be denied ; but as no security could be given that a reform would not be denied ; it was but fair to speak our minds out at once ; we spoke but hypothetically, and only said that we would prefer a government by King, Lords and Commons, were that Commons to be the true and real representatives of the people, rather than have recourse to violence, though we might esteem another form of government more perfect.

At a meeting of the Belfast Volunteer Battalion,  
(Blue) 29th December, 1792,

ROBERT GETTY IN THE CHAIR,

THE following Address to the Society of United  
Irishmen of Dublin, was unanimously agreed to :

*Friends and Countrymen,*

ACCEPT of our sincere thanks for your animating address to the Volunteers of Ireland ;—as a part of that body permit us to assure you, that we are ready to protect our ‘ Country in that guarded ‘ quiet, which may secure it from external hostility, ‘ and to maintain that internal regimen throughout ‘ the land, which superseding a notorious police, ‘ or a suspected militia, may preserve the blessings ‘ of peace, by a vigilant preparation for war.’

YOUR country is much indebted to you, for your zealous efforts to revive that latent spirit which has too long slumbered in the breasts of Irishmen ; on the efforts of the people, the freedom of Ireland depends.

Go on ! generous countrymen—continue your efforts for the good of the whole community. Tho’ envy may detract, tho’ corruption may calumniate, and tho’ the hand of power may be raised against you, yet success will crown your labours, for the people are with you, and will second your patriotic exertions.

ROBERT GETTY, CHAIRMAN,  
JAMES M’CLEAN, SEC.

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At a meeting of the Committee appointed by a late meeting of the inhabitants of Belfast, at the Donegall-Arms, on Monday the 31st of December, 1792,

JAMES HOLMES IN THE CHAIR :

RESOLVED, That this Committee do recommend it to the several parishes, granges, and great towns

in the county, to meet and elect each two persons, to represent them at a county meeting, to be held on the 14th day of January next, at Ballymena; for the purpose of promoting that great measure, an equal representation of all the people in parliament, and to determine on the propriety of calling a provincial meeting, to forward the same purpose.

RESOLVED, That in consequence of the powers vested in us, we do hereby request a meeting of the inhabitants of the parish of Shankill, at the parish church, on Saturday next, the fifth of January, to elect two Delegates to attend the meeting of this county, proposed to be held on the 14th January, at Ballymena:—And also, a meeting of the inhabitants of Belfast, at the town house, on Tuesday, the 8th January.

RESOLVED, That the mode of election on this occasion, be recommended to be by ballot; and in order to expedite the business, it is requested that each person do come prepared with the names of two Delegates, written on a piece of paper.

A COMMITTEE will attend with boxes constructed for the purpose of taking the ballot, from eleven o'clock until two on each of the days.

Committee adjourned till to-morrow at 12 o'clock,

JAMES HOLMES, CHAIRMAN.

### BELFAST LIGHT DRAGOONS.

JOHN BURDEN IN THE CHAIR.

AN authentic declaration of the public opinion, being now necessary, both for the direction of the legislature and the people: and as the country is not yet, we trust, so far degraded, that its unanimous and persevering demands upon any point of government, can be finally unsuccessful:—We, the members of the Belfast Light Dragoons, have assembled, in order to declare our political sentiments, viz.

I. WE deem that a government by a King, Lords, and Commons, the Commons being freely and frequently chosen by the people, is that best adapted to the genius of this country.

II. THAT the object of the people is not to introduce, but to abolish novelties, such as venal boroughs, octennial parliaments, and pensioned representatives;—what we reprobate is *new*—what we venerate is *ANCIENT*.

III. THAT we are determined to continue our exertions until we obtain an impartial representation, of *ALL* the people—ignorant of any principle by which a religious denomination should be excluded; nor could it be the intention of our ancestors to abridge a man of civil freedom, because he exercised religious liberty.

IV. THAT the only trusty safeguard of a country is an armed and disciplined people—We will therefore continue embodied, and in the use of arms, until we shall obtain the objects of our wishes; and then we will continue in arms that we may defend them.

HU. M'ILWAIN, SEC. B. L. D.

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#### BELFAST MEETING.

WE the subscribers, beg leave respectively to suggest to our townsmen, that we conceive it highly proper, at this time, for the inhabitants of Belfast to address our most gracious Sovereign, and humbly to offer their warmest thanks to his Majesty, for his paternal care of, and affection for, the people of Ireland, so strongly manifested by his Majesty's recommending to the serious consideration of his Irish Parliament, the situation of his Majesty's Roman Catholic subjects of Ireland.

AND we earnestly request a general and full meeting of the inhabitants on Saturday next, at the



town-house, at twelve o'clock, to consider of this business.

Belfast, 16th January, 1793.

Hugh Crawford	G. Milveen, jun.	Hugh Montgomery
John Cuming	William Tennent	Robert Thomson
William Sinclair	Henry Joy	William Bruce
Sinclair Kelburn	Henry Hallett	John Holmes
James Holmes	Thos. Andrews	George Wells
John Hallett	Thomas Brown.	Robert Simms
Edw. M'Cormick		

THE address to his Majesty from the inhabitants of Belfast, was confined solely to expressions of gratitude and thanks for his royal interference with Parliament in behalf of the Roman Catholics of Ireland.

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DECLARATION AND PRINCIPLES OF THE  
FRIENDS OF A PARLIAMENTARY REFORM,  
IN BELFAST:

AT THEIR SECOND MEETING ON THURSDAY 10TH  
JANUARY, 1793:

WADDELL CUNNINGHAM, IN THE CHAIR:

SEVERAL years have elapsed since many of the wisest and best men in England, Scotland, and Ireland, stimulated their countrymen to demand a *Parliamentary Reform*; under a conviction that it would conduce as much to the stability of government, as to the liberty of the people. Had that demand been unreasonable, or that reform unnecessary, both would long since have been forgotten or remained neglected. But that demand has gained strength by age: and the people instead of being lulled into indolence, are in danger of being roused into fury. Had the advice and intreaties of MODERATE MEN been attended to, the constitution and the administration of this country would now be

secure ; and continental revolutions would be contemplated by this free and peaceable island, as transactions in which we had no other share, than that which *man* should take in the sufferings or the welfare of *man*.

THOSE honest patriots who first excited the people and offered their best advice to government, are now called upon to remind and forewarn administration of the consequences of their former supineness, and their present obstinacy. They have also exerted themselves in keeping alive some respect for the *constitution*, and some regard to peace, together with hope of redress. But if their exhortations to government be slighted, they feel that their influence with the people will be equally disregarded. They will then be reduced to a dilemma, which cannot long hold them in suspense. They must take part with government, or they must enlist under the banners of the public. They must either co-operate in establishing a tyranny in their country, or rush into the intemperate measures of an indignant multitude. They may be obliged to renounce an infatuated, court, or to meet their dearest relations and friends in arms. Some may seek a remote retreat ; and lament in silence the miseries and the crimes by which their native land shall be overwhelmed ; but the more numerous and vigorous party will assuredly, after struggling in vain against the torrent, plunge into the flood of civil contest. They may *endeavour* to regulate its course and moderate its rage : but they will give it strength and perseverance. They will not be found among the least formidable enemies, or the least active patriots.

WE wish not to insinuate, that there exists at present any party hostile to a *peaceable settlement*. If there be, we know it not. But this we know, that the public mind is in a ferment ; that the public arm is strong ; and that the most desperate proposals may speedily become the most grateful.

WE therefore who have always fought for reform, within the limits of the constitution, and studied to combine liberty with peace, have determined not to slacken our exertions for the attainment of the one, and the preservation of the other. We have resolved that whatever may be the result of the present crisis, we shall be blameless; and that neither our rulers nor our fellow-subjects, shall have cause to accuse us either of *intemperance* or *remissness*. But we must at the same time solemnly declare that if the just demands of the people be despised, those *who refuse* and those who *resist* redress, will be answerable to posterity, to their country, and to God, for all the crimes and calamities that may follow.

IN order to avert these evils as much as in us lies, by promoting the objects recited above, we have associated under the title of the *Friends of a Parliamentary Reform*; and have drawn up the following fundamental principles, in the hopes that all who approve of their spirit will follow our example, by forming societies of the same kind; so that the *will of the public* may be so explicitly declared on a few clear indisputable points, that opposition to such measures may find no pretext in any shades of difference among the people. Actuated by these motives we solicit a friendly communication and correspondence with every society in Ireland instituted with similar views: from a desire to receive or give information on the subject of an improvement in the representation of the Commons in their own House of Parliament; on a plan for its reform; and on the most effectual measures for carrying it into execution.

#### PRINCIPLES.

I. A Constitution composed of *the King, Lords, and People*, the latter fully and equally represented in a House of Commons, *we prefer to every other*—as admirably suited to the genius, wishes and interests of Ireland.

II. THE present mode of representation is absurd, unequal, and inadequate ; contrary to the spirit of our own and of every free government.

III. We assert, that the basis of election should be extended to the people of every religious denomination.

WITH a constitution so modelled, as to restore the just rights of the collective body, without infringing on the prerogative of the Crown, or on the dignities of the peerage, we think this nation, whose loyalty has ever kept pace with their love of freedom, will be satisfied and rest content. To obtain it therefore, it is the duty of every individual in the most remote part of the realm to come forward, as the voice of the whole people cannot be raised without redress. It is the interest of all orders in the state, from the Sovereign through every gradation of the constituted Powers, to submit to the demands of justice ; for that government is uncertain, fluctuating, and liable to eternal convulsions which is founded on principles opposed to *the public will*. A government to which the consent of the community is wanting verges on despotism, and will terminate in anarchy.

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AT the third meeting of the society, held January 19, 1793 :—

NARCISSUS BATT, IN THE CHAIR :

RESOLVED, That a correspondence be opened with THE FRIENDS *of the Constitution, of Liberty and Peace* in DUBLIN ; and that copies of these and future public transactions of this society be regularly transmitted to them.

Signed by order

NARCISSUS BATT,

CHAIRMAN.

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## MILITARY RIOT IN BELFAST,

ON SATURDAY; 9TH OF MARCH, 1793.

THIS town, after having been for time immemorial on the best footing with his Majesty's forces quartered here, on Saturday night presented a scene subversive of the order, decency, and safety of the community.

ABOUT three quarters of an hour after six o'clock in the evening, a body of the 17th dragoons, intermixed with a few others of the military, rushed out from their quarters and drove furiously through most of the principal streets, with their sabres drawn, cutting at any one that came in their way, and attacking houses. This lasted near an hour, when, through the interference of magistrates, and some military officers, the party were dispersed. In the course of this business, the windows of a number of the inhabitants were broken; and some signs torn down. A great number of persons were slightly wounded, though none took any part in giving opposition to the affray. Charles Ranken, Esq. a Justice of Peace for the County of Antrim, in endeavouring to take an artillery man, and after commanding his Majesty's peace by virtue of his office, was repeatedly stabbed at, and in a slight degree wounded. Mr. Campbell, Surgeon, happening to be in a street through which the party were driving, one of them ran across it, and made several cuts at him, some of which penetrated thro' his clothes, and slightly wounded him. The windows of a milliner's shop were broken, in which cockades were hung up for sale. A man had his ear and his hand cut with a sword. Happily no lives were lost; and to the prudence and quiet demeanour of the town's people it was owing.

THE houses which suffered most were those of Mr. M'Cabe, watch-maker; Mr. Orr, chandler; Mr. Watson, on the quay; Mr. Johnson, and Mr. Sinclair, public-house keepers in North street; and



the shop of Miss Wills, a milliner, in High-street. Their malice seemed principally levelled at the Volunteers. Two of the dragoons received ample punishment from the swords of their officers. The consternation of the town may be easily supposed.

Two causes have been assigned for this unprovoked disturbance : viz. that there was a sign of Dumourier at a small public-house in North street ; and that a blind fiddler who plays through the streets at night, happened to be playing *Ca Ira*, a French air. With respect to the sign, it was erected before there was any prospect of a war with France ; and the circumstance of its being there could not be countenanced by the people, for few had ever heard of it till the riot brought it into notice. As to a tune played by a blind mendicant, it is too trifling a cause to be seriously mentioned, though he deposed on oath that he never knew the tune in question.

As soon as intelligence of the riot reached the officers of the troops, at the barrack mess, they used much activity in suppressing it. Great praise is due to the exertions of the Magistrates ; but the rapidity with which the party forced their way through the town, made it impracticable to suppress it till the injury was done. The gentleman who commands the regiment now in barracks, Captain M'Donnel, signalized himself by the most active exertions ; and his regiment, the 55th, behaved extremely well.—The circumstance of General Whyte's absence on other necessary duty, was much regretted ; but he returned to town instantly on hearing of the matter. A guard of 450 Volunteers sat up during the night, and no farther harm ensued.

On Sunday, the Sovereign, by request, called a meeting of the town at three o'clock, to consider of the best means of preserving the peace, and bringing the offenders to punishment. In the mean time Major General Whyte had arrived from Carrickfergus, and gave assurances of his earnest de-

fire to co-operate with the civil power in bringing the offenders to punishment, and promoting the security and peace of the town. A committee was appointed by the town meeting to enquire into the cause of the disturbances, and report to a future one, to be convened by them as soon as their report was ready. This committee consisted of 22, amongst whom were the Sovereign, High Constable, and all the Magistrates resident in town.—This committee, according to instruction, sat at a quarter past six on Sunday evening.—General White was invited to attend as a member, which he seemed rather to decline, but desired an interview with the committee, to whom he repeated his good wishes for the peace of the town, and expressed his wish and his reasons for desiring that the volunteers who were assembled, to the number of 450, would disperse; as he had ordered a patrol of officers, and a strong guard of the 55th regiment, who have always behaved with order and regularity; and at same time pledged himself to call upon the inhabitants and join them himself, if any necessity required it. A deputation was immediately sent from the committee to the volunteers, with a paper stating these facts, and requesting them to separate, which they instantly complied with.

THE horsemen by whom principally this affair was conducted, were entire strangers, having only come in on the morning of the riot, though they seemed very well acquainted with the streets and houses before night-fall.

ON Monday morning the committee sat by adjournment, at ten o'clock, and proceeded to examine witnesses upon oath respecting the rioters, for the purpose of bringing the aggressors, whether soldiers or others, to justice; but a fresh assault being made by a trooper, on a poor unoffending boy, with many expressions of menace which had been heard, shewed the necessity of removing them from a place which

they had already so much insulted. Upon the committee representing this new fact to the General, he with a readiness which does him great honour, and deserves the warmest applause, ordered not only the four troops which came into town on Saturday, but also the remaining two of their regiment, which had marched 17 miles that morning, instantly to leave town. Two troops he had previously ordered to parade in the morning, that such persons as could identify any of the rioters, might have an opportunity of doing so, and three of them were accordingly turned over to the civil power; but as the darkness of the hour, the familiarity of their dress, and the rapidity with which they executed their purpose, made it difficult to bring conviction home to any who had been guilty of the most aggravated assaults, they were suffered to depart with their comrades.

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MONDAY, MARCH 11—3 O'CLOCK.

THE Committee of the town of Belfast, appointed by the inhabitants at large, for the purpose of taking into consideration the riotous proceedings of several troopers and others, on Saturday night last :

THINK it proper to declare, that there is a perfect co-operation between the very respectable character who commands his Majesty's forces in this part of the kingdom, Major General Whyte, and this committee—and that such steps have, with the General's concurrence, and with this committee's, been taken, as will, it is believed, completely preserve quiet and peace.

THE public may rest assured that every measure will be adopted to bring the matter to a proper conclusion.

THE general conduct of the 55th regiment has hitherto been such, as far as it falls within our knowledge—as to deserve the approbation of this town.

For self and rest of the Committee,  
 WILLIAM BRISTOW, SOVEREIGN,  
 CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMITTEE.

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IT has been matter of surprize to every friend of Belfast, living at a distance from it, that its inhabitants submitted without a murmur, and without the slightest exculpation on their part, to the most erroneous and deceitful accounts of the riots between them and the military. To obviate that error, the following Report is now first given in print. It was read in presence of the people, assembled for the purpose, and became a public property. It is brought forward in confutation of those who represented the conduct of the town as indefensible, because it did not defend itself; as well as for information to others, who respected the general conduct of the place, but were deprived of every argument in its favor, by its silent acquiescence.

THIS Report was framed by the Committee, with an alteration made by Major General Whyte, then in Belfast, commanding his Majesty's forces in this part of the kingdom, and lately invested with the Commission of the Peace for the county of Antrim; who thus united the functions of a Civil Magistrate with the efficient powers of a military officer. Had it been adopted by the town at large, it was to have been published as the act of the inhabitants, with the concurrence of the General. The reader will in a moment perceive, by the manner in which the statement was drawn up, that no grounds whatever were laid to justify *any* attack. The privates of a military corps, just arrived in a town, the inhabitants of which they were necessarily

unacquainted with, (having only marched in that morning) *avow an intention of committing an outrage*; and put it in practice in the clouds of that very night, by attacking several houses, and wounding and maiming indiscriminately many inhabitants, peaceably walking about their business.—The Report was rejected by the town, principally because it contained an implication of disaffection, the existence of which, in any degree whatever, would not be admitted. The lives and properties of the people are precarious indeed, if held at the mercy of men armed by their profession. Were such instances of insubordination general, military discipline would be at an end, and the existence of the state itself endangered.—July 1793.

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#### REPORT OF A COMMITTEE,

Appointed at a town meeting, held on Sunday, 10th March, 1793, consisting of twenty-two Gentlemen, including the Sovereign, five Magistrates, and the High-Constable of the Barony of Belfast, to enquire into the causes and consequences of a dangerous riot, which happened the preceding evening.

[Rejected by the inhabitants at a town meeting, held on the 18th March; in consequence of which no authenticated account of this daring, premeditated, and unprovoked riot ever appeared.]

IN discharge of the trust reposed in us, we have heard the depositions of several witnesses, solemnly examined on oath before the Magistrates.

It was proved, that between six and seven o'clock, on the evening of Saturday, 9th instant, an alarming riot began, in which several houses in the town were attacked and injured, and some of the inhabitants wounded and maimed, by a number of dragoons of the 17th regiment, (who came into the



town on the morning of that day) aided by two artillery men.

THAT by the active exertions of the Magistrates, of Captain Bourne, Aid du Camp to Major General Whyte, and of the officers of the 17th dragoons and 55th regiment of foot, it was soon happily quelled.

It was proved, that some of the troopers, in the interval between their arrival in town and the commencement of the riot, had *avowed their intention of committing outrage* against certain individuals, who had been represented to them as disaffected.

THAT some of the rabble, consisting of ten or twelve boys and raggamuffins, (as the witness expressed it) *not one decent or reputable person* having appeared among them, had insisted that a fidler in the street, who had been called on by some of the troopers to play "God save the King," should not play it; and also used disloyal expressions against his Majesty, and all those that took his part; that a stone was thrown by some of the rabble, and that the troopers then proceeded to demolish the signs of Dumourier, Franklin, and Mirabeau.

THE public will judge, if these circumstances should be admitted as *any* palliation of the violent outrages committed afterwards by the troopers, on the persons and property of the unoffending inhabitants, whom the dragoons deemed disaffected; some of whom they could have no reason of thinking so, and who had not offered them the shadow of provocation.

FROM delicacy, and an earnest wish that peace and harmony should be effectually restored to the town, we forbear giving a minute detail of the evidence, which appeared before us; and we trust that in future a perfect good understanding and concord will subsist in this town amongst all his Majesty's subjects, of every description, denomination and profession.

We have seen with indignation several erroneous representations of this riot ; tending more to enflame than to conciliate the parties, which this report will prove to have been gross misrepresentations of it,—without authority—without evidence\*.

We cannot close this report, without observing that the conduct of Major General Whyte, commander in chief of his Majesty's forces in the province of Ulster, has given the highest satisfaction to the public, and that his vigilance, the judicious orders issued by him as commander in chief, and his ready compliance with the wishes of the inhabitants, evince that he is a steady friend to the peace of the community—and reflect equal honour on his prudence and humanity.

Belfast, 18th March, 1793.

\* Alluding, it is supposed, to unwarranted accounts of it published in Dublin.

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[The two following articles are not arranged according to their dates, but are inserted in the order they stand, for the purpose of connection with what precedes them.]

ON Monday evening, the 15th of April, about eight o'clock, a party of the artillery and 38th regiment, who had arrived in this town on Friday last, attacked a sign of the late *Doctor Franklin*, which being made of copper and hung with iron, had withstood the sabres of the 17th dragoons—but on this occasion was laid prostrate by the assistance of a rope. They then attacked and pulled down the sign over the newspaper office of the Northern Star. What their next enterprize would have been we know not ; but at this period, the arrival of the Sovereign, and a number of their officers, put a stop to the *evening's amusement*. The signs, which had been removed to some distance, were abandoned

to their proper owners, and immediately replaced.—None of the inhabitants were hurt on the occasion.

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SATURDAY night, 25th May, 1793, exhibited another of those military affrays to which this town has been subjected for some time past. We do not wish to enter into a detail of the violences committed; suffice it to say, that some of the inhabitants were dangerously wounded, none mortally.—Mr. Birnie, who received a stab in his back, and was otherwise much hurt, is in a fair way of recovery. The young gentleman who, at the commencement of this disagreeable business, pursued a young man of Mr. Birnie's with his sword, has, in a very honourable manner, made an ample apology, in consequence of which, no law proceedings will take place. Captain Barber, of the artillery, has on this, as indeed on every other occasion, since he has been quartered in this town, behaved with the utmost propriety, displaying at once the spirit of a good officer, and the humanity of a good man.

It is generally believed Mr. Birnie would have been killed, had it not been for the spirited exertions of Captain Barber and Lieutenant George, in aid of the Sovereign.

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ABOUT the first of March 1793, the committee of the BELFAST REGIMENT framed the following memorial, and they requested the concurrence of the BELFAST BATTALION. The committee of the battalion had acceded to the principle, and it only waited the vote of the respective bodies, at large, in order to be transmitted to the Lord Lieutenant. It was also intended to be proposed to the volunteers, by some members of the committees,—that in case *the Lord Lieutenant should give a favourable answer*, they should inform General Whyte, that if a foreign enemy should land in this country, the volunteers would place themselves under his command.

TO HIS EXCELLENCY

JOHN EARL OF WESTMORELAND,

LORD LIEUTENANT GENERAL AND GENERAL GOVERNOR OF  
IRELAND.*The Memorial of the Volunteers of the Town of Belfast*

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY,

WE, your memorialists, associated together in the year 1778, to learn the use of arms, for the purpose of aiding in the protection of this kingdom, from foreign as well as domestic enemies.—Since that period we never ceased to be embodied, and we always held annual reviews.

WE of late observe, with much regret, that we are charged with disaffection to the King, and to the form of Government of this kingdom, in as much as we have, *as armed men*, expressed our sentiments respecting the necessity of a reform in the representation of the people, in the Commons House of Parliament.—We do hereby declare in the most solemn manner, that the charge is a vile and infamous calumny.—It is our warm attachment to the form of our government that induces us to be so ardent in the pursuit of the only measure which we think can perpetuate it.

WE have been charged with adopting French principles—it is true we have frequently testified our joy at the success of France, when an host of foes had penetrated into that country for the purpose of restoring the old despotism.—But this exultation at the triumphs of the French arose not from a wish to see all their practices (several of which we detest) introduced into this kingdom ; but because that people were thus enabled to choose their own government—which we presume, is the natural and unalienable right of every people.—And this principle leads us to abhor the idea, of any foreign interference with the people or government of our own country : —We have said and do most certainly think that abuses exist in the administration of the govern-

ment of Ireland—but we wish to see these abuses corrected by the good sense of the Irish nation, not by interference from abroad.

IN the year 1781, when we were involved in a war, the principles of which we disliked as much as we do the present; when the fleets of the enemy rode triumphant on our seas, we stood forward and set an example to our brother volunteers, by offering our services to government against invasion of any kind. We presume our conduct had its effect, and are convinced the idea of invasion was then abandoned, from a knowledge of the strength and disposition of the volunteer army.—And let us ask, should an invasion be now meditated, is it by the few solitary regiments, scattered over this kingdom, that our enemies would be deterred?—no—we are bold to say, with our countrymen, who spoke a few days ago from Dungannon—that the volunteers are the only sure and natural defence of Ireland.

WE hold it an incontrovertible fact, that citizens, by learning the use of arms, and employing them in defence of their country, do not loose or give up any of their rights: were it otherwise, why did we receive the unanimous thanks of both Houses of Parliament after our interference, *as armed men*, in the recovery of our trade in 1779, the recovery of an Irish legislature in 1782, and the calling for a reform in 1783?

EVER since our original formation we have given energy to the law, and maintained the most profound tranquillity in this town and neighbourhood, and this has of late been attended with some difficulty, owing to the recent introduction and wide extension of the cotton and other manufactures, which have brought with them a number of artizans from Manchester, Dublin, and elsewhere, strangers to the place, a few of whom introduced those dispositions of combination and outrage, to which this town was heretofore a stranger; and the vigilance of our Magistracy has had real cause on several occasions



to recur to our bodies for assistance, and we are proud to say, they never called on us in vain, nor were our joint exertions ever unsuccessful in restoring order.

THREE times have we marched to the distance of twenty miles to enforce the law and apprehend offenders—in all cases we succeeded, and in two of them (the reduction of forcible possessions) we could not have done so without our artillery. The last instance evinced a regard for the law, bordering on adoration.

AN absentee landlord (Earl Hertford) had brought an ejectment against some of his poor tenantry, who lived in a wild uncivilized part of the country, whose ancestors had lived in the place for upwards of a century, who were willing to pay the full rent, and whose principal crime was said to be election opposition—notwithstanding the peculiar circumstances of the case—Notwithstanding that the proprietor of the soil stood directly opposed to this town in election matters—yet on the application of the Sheriff, who had been twice repulsed from the place, and who had applied to the military in vain, we instantly accompanied him to the spot, where after an obstinate resistance of two hours, during which time we expended upwards of forty rounds of cannon shot, besides a smart discharge of musquetry—we obtained and delivered to the Sheriff the possession, and afterwards apprehended the offenders, who have been since convicted, and transported to Botany Bay.

A FEW months only have elapsed, since we received the thanks of Lord Hertford, of the Sheriff, and of the Magistrates of the county, assembled at the Quarter Sessions, for this exertion in support of the law.

FOR a long series of years we have been in the habit of mounting guard, by rotation, in this town nightly, (when there was occasion) under the direction of the Chief Magistrate; whereby our

townsmen have slept in quiet, without fear of the nocturnal depredator; and the consequence of this, together with the unwearied vigilance of the Chief Magistrate, have been, that robbery is at present unknown in Belfast.

We have lately encreased our numbers, and renovated our discipline; and this, it has been said, with a view to intimidate the legislature: nothing more false; our objects are the same they ever were, the defence of our country and the support of the law; let it not be said however, that we are by any means heedless of reform: no! it is the first desire of our hearts; but this reform we only wish to proceed from the general will of our countrymen; and we earnestly hope it may be granted by parliament. But we are at all times ready and willing to co-operate with government in opposing any party or set of men whatever, who should presume to impose any plan or wild ideas of reform upon the Irish nation, whether they come from abroad or originate at home.

YOUR memorialists having thus stated their conduct and their sentiments, beg leave to call your Excellency's attention to an act of Parliament, which lately became law in this kingdom, entitled "An act to prevent the importation of arms, gunpowder, &c." and which act, as explained in passing through the House of Commons, was intended not to affect our "laudable institutions," but to operate against certain disturbers of the public peace, who have kept several counties of this kingdom in a ferment for some years past, and who still continue their depredations; but to the very great surprise and astonishment of your memorialists, an attempt has been made to extend it to us.

YOUR memorialists therefore request, that your Excellency would give such directions, conformable to the spirit of that act, and to the manner in which it was explained, when passing into a law, so as it may not be extended in any manner

to affect us. Or if that shall not seem expedient to your Excellency, that your Excellency would be pleased to grant such licence as may enable us to keep our usual stock of ammunition, and to possess and use our cannon as heretofore, in support of the law, and in the defence of our country.

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As Belfast and the County of Antrim are deeply concerned in *the Report of the Lords' Committees*, dated 1793, we give a *verbatim* copy of it, as far as those places are alluded to.

“ AN unusual ferment has for some months past disturbed several parts of the North, particularly the town of Belfast, and the County of Antrim; it is kept up and encouraged by seditious papers and pamphlets, of the most dangerous tendency, printed at very cheap and inconsiderate rates in Dublin and Belfast, which issue almost daily from certain societies of men or clubs in both those places, calling themselves committees under various descriptions, and carrying on a constant correspondence with each other.—These publications are circulated amongst the people with the utmost industry, and appear to be calculated to defame the Government and Parliament, and to render the people dissatisfied with their condition and with the laws. The conduct of the French is shamefully extolled, and recommended to the public view as an example for imitation; hopes and expectations have been held up of their assistance by a descent upon this kingdom, and prayers have been offered up at Belfast, from the pulpit, for the success of their arms, in the presence of military associations, which have been newly levied and arrayed in that town. A body of men associated themselves in Dublin, under the title of the First National Battalion; their uniform is copied from the French, green turned up

with white, white waistcoat, and striped trowsers, gilt buttons, impressed with a harp, and letters importing, " First National Battalion ;" no Crown, but a device over the harp of a Cap of Liberty upon a pike ;—two pattern coats were left at two shops in Dublin. Several bodies of men have been collected in different parts of the North, armed and disciplined under officers chosen by themselves, and composed mostly of the lowest classes of the people. These bodies are daily increasing in numbers and force ;—they have exerted their best endeavours to procure military men of experience to act as their officers ;—some of them having expressly stated that there were MEN enough to be had, but that OFFICERS were what they wanted. Stands of arms, and gun-powder, to a very large amount, much above the common consumption, have been sent, within these few months past, to Belfast and Newry, and orders given for a much greater quantity, which it appears could be wanted only for military operations. At Belfast, bodies of men in arms are drilled and exercised for several hours, almost every night, by candle-light ; and attempts have been made to seduce the soldiery, which, much to the honour of the King's forces, have proved ineffectual. The declared object of these military bodies is to procure a Reform of Parliament, but the obvious intention of most of them appears to be to overawe the Parliament and the Government, and to dictate to both. The Committee forbear mentioning the names of several persons, lest it should in any manner affect any criminal prosecution, or involve the personal safety of any man who has come forward to give them information. The result of their enquiries is, That, in their opinion, it is incompatible with the public safety and tranquility of this kingdom, to permit bodies of men in arms to assemble when they please, without any legal authority—and that the existence of a self created representative body, of any description of the King's subjects,

taking upon itself the government of them, and levying taxes or subscriptions to be applied at the discretion of such representative body, or of persons deputed by them, is also incompatible with the public safety and tranquility."

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AT A MEETING OF THE  
DISSENTING MINISTERS OF BELFAST,

HELD ON THE 11TH DAY OF MARCH, 1793:

IT was agreed, that the following declaration be published, and a copy of it transmitted to the Lord Chancellor.

HAVING seen in the report of the Lords' Committees, dated 7th March, 1793, the following words, viz. "Prayers have been offered up at Belfast, from the pulpit, for the success of their arms," meaning the arms of the French, "in the presence of military associations which have been newly levied and arrayed in that town,"

WE, whose names are hereunto annexed, stated ministers of distinct Protestant Dissenting Congregations in the town of Belfast, do hereby solemnly declare, each of us for himself, that the information given to their Lordships of the committees, upon this subject is, as far as concerns us, *totally groundless.*

JAMES BRYSON,  
P. VANCE,  
WILL. BRUCE, D. D.  
Principal of the Belfast Academy.

SINCE the French declaration of war against Great-Britain and Ireland was known here, I did not pray for the "Success of their Arms;" I do not recollect that I ever used the words; I am certain that I never prayed for success to the French arms before any military association.

SINCLARE KELBURN.

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CERTAIN circumstances having prevented me from attending the meeting of the Dissenting Ministers of Belfast, on the 11th instant; at which they agreed to exculpate themselves from certain charges contained in the report of the Lords' Committees, relative to them, by a solemn declaration, that the information given to their Lordships, on which the said charges are founded, is *totally groundless*:—In this declaration, as subscribed by the Revd. Messrs. Bryson, Vance, and Bruce, I for myself, fully and perfectly concur.

Belfast, March 12th, 1793.

WM. CARMICHAEL.

*Extract of a public Letter, dated 11th March, from the Right Hon. Secretary Robert Hobart, to the Sovereign of Belfast.*

“ YOU will be pleased to apprize the leading persons concerned in the armed associations of Belfast, that it is deemed to be the indispensable duty of government to forbid all unlawful meetings, under whatever pretence they may assemble, which spreads terror among his Majesty's liege subjects—and it will be right to acquaint them, that if after the warning held out to them by the proclamation, they shall persist in their illegal assemblies, the Magistrates will think themselves bound to disperse the same, and bring the persons concerned therein to the just punishment of the law.

“ IT is hoped that the proclamation will of itself have full effect, and that no person whatever, will attempt to violate the law in that behalf, especially as ignorance thereof can, after such warning, be no longer pleaded. If, however, any body of men shall, in defiance of said proclamation, appear in arms, it will then be the duty of the Magistrates to direct them to disperse; and if they shall fail to dis-

perse upon the order of the Magistrate, such Magistrate will arrest the leaders of the said body, and if he shall be resisted in the execution of his duty, he is to apply to General Whyte, who will afford him such assistance as shall be necessary to enable him to carry the laws into execution. And, if any body shall again assemble in arms in Belfast, and the neighbourhood, the Magistrate will exert himself to prevent the same, for which purpose, General Whyte has directions to give every assistance in his power."

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BY THE LORD LIEUTENANT AND COUNCIL OF  
IRELAND,

*A P R O C L A M A T I O N.*

WESTMORLAND.

WHEREAS it appears by the report from the Lords Committees, appointed to enquired into the causes of the disorders and disturbances which prevail in several parts of this kingdom, that certain seditious and ill affected persons in several parts of the north of this kingdom, particularly in the town of Belfast, have endeavoured to foment and encourage discontent, and by seditious publications circulated amongst the people, and calculated to defame the Government and the Parliament, have endeavoured to render people dissatisfied with their condition, and with the laws.

AND whereas it appears to us, by the said report, that several bodies of men have been collected into armed associations, and have been levied and arrayed in the said town of Belfast, and that arms and gun-powder, to a very large amount, have been sent thither; that bodies of men in arms are drilled and exercised by day and by night, and that the declared object of the said armed bodies is redress of alleged grievances, but that the obvious intention of most of them appears to be to overawe the Parliament and the government, and to dictate to both,

AND whereas these dangerous and seditious proceedings tend to the disturbance of the public peace, the obstruction of good order and government, to the great injury of public credit, and the subversion of the constitution, and have raised great alarms in the minds of his Majesty's loyal subjects.

Now we the Lord Lieutenant and Council, being determined to maintain the public peace against all attempts to disturb the same, and being desirous to forewarn all such persons as might unadvisedly incur the penalties of the law in this behalf, by concurring in practices of a tendency so dangerous and alarming, do hereby strictly charge all persons whomsoever, on their allegiance to his Majesty, to abstain from committing such offences respectively.

AND we do charge and command the Magistrates, Sheriffs, Bailiffs, and other Peace Officers, having jurisdiction within the said town of Belfast, and the several districts adjacent thereto, to be careful in preserving the peace within the same, and to disperse all seditious and unlawful assemblies; and if they shall be resisted, to apprehend the offenders, that they may be dealt with according to law.

GIVEN at the Council-Chamber in Dublin, the 11th day of March, 1793.

Fitz Gibbon, C. R. Dublin, Charles Canel, Waterford, Westmeath, Shannon, Bellamont, Chas. Fitz-Gerald, Glandore, Dillon, Valentia, Pery, Gosford, Clonmell, Loftus, Muskerry, Mountjoy, Carleton, J. Beresford, J. H. Hutchinson, Lucius O'Brien, J. Blaquiere, H. Langrishe, T. Conolly, Theo. Jones, Henry King, H. T. Clements, R. Cunninghame, James Cuff, R. Hobart, D. Latouche, J. Monk Mason, James Fitzgerald, R. Longfield, Wm. Forward.

GOD SAVE THE KING.

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IN compliance with the proclamation, the Volunteers ceased to parade, or any longer to appear in military array.

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STRICTURES ON THE TEST,  
TAKEN BY CERTAIN OF  
THE SOCIETIES OF UNITED IRISHMEN;  
WITH ANSWERS TO THE SAME:

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED IN THE BELFAST NEWS-LETTER.

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STRICTURE.

NO. I.

“ I, A. B. in the presence of God do pledge myself to  
“ my country, that I will use *all my abilities and influ-*  
“ *ence* in the attainment of an *impartial* and adequate  
“ representation of the Irish nation in Parliament; and  
“ as a means of absolute and immediate necessity, in  
“ the establishment of this chief good of Ireland, I will  
“ endeavour, *as much as lies in my ability*, to forward a  
“ brotherhood of affection, an identity of interest, a  
“ *communion of rights* and an *union of power* among Irish-  
“ men of all religious persuasions, without which every  
“ reform of Parliament must be *partial*, not national,  
“ inadequate to the wants, delusive to the wishes, and  
“ insufficient for the freedom and happiness of this  
“ country.”

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THIS Test, originally taken by the Societies of United Irishmen in Dublin, has since been adopted by a respectable community of the same denomination in Belfast—associated no doubt with the best views and for the noblest purposes, but actuated by a zeal more ardent in the pursuit of their object than discreet in the means of obtaining it. It has lately been rejected by other societies and individuals en-

gaged in the same cause. The following exposition of its principles is now made, in order to justify those who have declined entering into this engagement, to relieve those who have formed it from the consequence of their imprudence, and to prevent others from precipitating themselves into such an embarrassing situation.

1. THIS TEST *professes to bind every man who takes it*, "TO USE ALL HIS ABILITIES AND INFLUENCE, AND TO ENDEAVOUR AS MUCH AS LIES IN HIS ABILITY, to attain certain objects.— If this be a mere rhetorical flourish, it is improper in so solemn an engagement, being calculated to deceive, instead of inspiring any just confidence; that is, if "ALL" signifies only SOME, every one may use as little as he pleases, and the persons to whom he is pledged know not what to depend on. If these words be construed in their *strict* sense, they imply that every duty and business, domestic, commercial, political, and religious, must be relinquished till these objects be attained, unless he can devote *all* his abilities and influence to one object, and reserve the *rest* of them for another!

2. ONE object to which the Society is bound exclusively of every other pursuit is, an IMPARTIAL Representation of the Irish Nation. The word "*impartial*," in its original sense, which at the same time agrees best with the purpose and spirit of the United Irishmen, imports, that every man, adult or a minor, nay every woman, in short every rational being, shall have equal weight in electing representatives. In the most limited signification which can be admitted, it means—that every man of mature age shall have a vote for members of Parliament without regard to property; for it would be inconsistent with "*impartiality*" to require a pecuniary qualification to enable him to exercise the elective franchise; to make liberty a vendible commodity; to make a scruple of *taxing* a man, but none of *hanging* him, by a law to which he had not consented. This embraces a great variety of the most difficult questions in politics, upon which a wise man would hesitate to commit himself. It includes in particular the subject of UNIVERSAL SUFFRAGE, respecting which the greatest men of our own time have differed. It goes far beyond the American, and even the French constitution, which is reckoned rather a hazardous experiment; not to mention the British, which is a subject of history and experience.



3. *The test pretends to pledge those who take it, TO ENDEAVOUR as much as lies in their ability to forward A COMMUNION OF RIGHTS and AN UNION OF POWER among Irishmen of all religious persuasions*; that is, that all men shall have COMMON RIGHTS and EQUAL POWER; that the majority shall have power in proportion to their numbers, and consequently if the Roman Catholics be ten times as numerous as the Presbyterians, they shall have ten times as much power; of course, being so great a majority of the people, they may take into their hands the exercise of government the enacting and repealing of laws, the administration of justice, the establishment of a religion, and the new-modeling of the constitution. This, and the preceding sections, involve matter, with respect to which the wise, the learned, and the patriotic, for many generations have disputed; but on which *some* of the United Irishmen pledge themselves, not only that they *now* agree, but that they will continue to agree, till the purpose be obtained; that is, till it be too late to change their minds. And though they should change their minds before they have obtained it, they are still to be bound by these mental chains to prosecute their plan, even in contradiction to conviction and conscience.

AGAINST this ensnaring oath it is becoming in every man to caution his fellow-citizens, and it is the duty of a minister to warn his people. This is more especially true, when they are convened to discuss a great question, under an idea that they are pledged to resist conviction and to persist in error.

4. As *this test is calculated to oblige men ALWAYS TO RETAIN THE SAME OPINION*, it is unphilosophical and inconsistent with the dignity and *primary right of man*—freedom of thought. As it engages them to persevere, tho' they should change their opinions, it is sinful. As it prejudices the most difficult and important principles, at the very time when they are about to be discussed, it is presumptuous and uncandid. And as it is either impracticable or immoral, it cannot be binding, and ought to be openly renounced, lest any one should be deceived.

THE oath "never to separate until the constitution should be established," which was taken by the National Assembly of France after they had been excluded from their

house by the troops, was a declaration, that they would persist in the discharge of the trust committed to them by their constituents—and therefore strictly moral and obligatory. It implies no exception, nor reservation, except in case of irresistible force, sickness, or death, which are always understood to be excepted.

It is creditable to this town and country, that some individuals, and whole Societies of United Irishmen, have declined this oath, though, no doubt, as zealous as any of their brethren.

5. THE style is not that of a test, pledge, or oath. It does not carry with it the deliberation, precision, or perspicuity of such an engagement. It is declamatory, full of point and antithesis. It is the composition of a jesuitical, a rhetorical, or an enthusiastic mind: for either through craft, vanity, or precipitation, it is calculated to deceive. Thus, lest the force of the word "*impartial*" should be discerned, it is yoked with "*adequate*;" as if they meant the same thing: and lest *union of power* should shock the minority of the kingdom, it is so smothered by a crowd of plausible expressions, that many of those, who have taken the oath, seem never to have observed the phrase. In like manner "*partial*" is involved in the blaze of a splendid, or the fumes of a smoky phraseology. The French and American constitutions are *partial*; that is, franchise is restricted to property: the British, in its best days, was *partial*; for it excluded some civil and some religious denominations of the people from any share in the government. The United Irishmen therefore swear, that these are *not national, but delusive; inadequate to the wants, delusive to the wishes, and insufficient for the freedom and happiness of a people.*

6. As the test does not speak of any period of time in which these changes are to take place, it must be understood of the present instant: for if it leave every one to defer these exertions as long as he shall think proper, the Societies cannot act together; the Roman Catholics can have no security that they will ever act; and their emancipation must be gradual and progressive. While therefore the United Irishmen conceive themselves subject to the obligation of this oath, they cannot vote for any thing short of *immediate and universal enfranchisement.*

7. OATHS concerning FUTURE opinion or belief, entrap and imprison the mind. A FREE-man loves and thanks even the enemy who would lead him to the truth, or convince him that he is in an error; because he can avail himself of his kindness. But he who has SWORN, thinks he cannot change, and therefore hates even his friend that would disturb his ignorant and bigoted repose. He accordingly associates only with his *fellow jurors*, who foster his prejudices, influence his passions, and throw dust in his eyes; so that, when he issues from his club-room, and meets the old, staunch and effectual friends of civil and religious liberty, he mistakes them for dotards, courtiers, and sycophants.

It is curious to observe, how generally and rapidly CREEDS AND CONFESSIONS, even on political subjects, lead to intolerance and spiritual pride; which naturally engender petulance and rage, low intrigue, and disingenuous artifice. But even the rustic, when he heard two logicians disputing in *Latin*, could tell, that he who seemed to lose his temper, had certainly lost his cause. — Feb. 10, 1792.

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### ANSWER.

No. 1.

### TO THE STRICTURES ON THE TEST OF THE UNITED IRISHMEN.

“ I, A. B. in the presence of God, do pledge myself to  
“ my country, that I will use *all my abilities and influence* in  
“ the attainment of an impartial and adequate representation  
“ of the Irish nation in Parliament; and as a means of abso-  
“ lute and immediate necessity in the establishment of this  
“ chief good of Ireland, I will endeavour, *as much as lies in*  
“ *my ability*, to forward a brotherhood of affection, an identity  
“ of interest, *a communion of rights*, and *an union of power*,  
“ among Irishmen of all religious persuasions, without  
“ which every reform in Parliament must be *partial*, not na-  
“ tional, inadequate to the wants, delusive to the wishes,  
“ and insufficient for the freedom and happiness of this  
“ country.”

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AN IRISHMAN, the dearest wish of whose heart is, that his countrymen should love one another, unite, and be free, has read, with extreme concern, some ingenious, tho' fretful, strictures on the test taken by the United Societies of Belfast and Dublin. The paper appears to be written too much with the spirit of a partizan, who makes or exasperates hostility, rather than with that of a patriot, anxious, at this time, to extinguish the first spark of civil discord; or of a philanthropist, anxious at all times, to maintain peace on earth and good will among men.—The argument seems cold casuistry; the stile betrays pique and irritation.—The one must be refuted; and with respect to a little peevishness of epithet in the other, whoever notices it least, will answer it best, and best maintain his own superiority.

1. The objection against the use of the terms *all my abilities and influence*, and *as much as lies in my ability*, is founded on a sophism that runs like a flaw through the whole composition. Two senses of a phrase are taken, the most opposite that can be attributed to it:—one the most loose, and another the most limited; one the most strict and philosophical, another the most vague and indefinite; and then the author holds them out, saying, of these *two* you *must* take *one*. He keeps swinging between the extremes of signification, and always shoots past the plain and accepted meaning which lies before him in common use and daily life. His dilemma is always fallacious from its partial enumeration. These phrases in the test are not addressed to rhetoricians who bask in moonshine, or to philosophers who strain at gnats of objections, but to the common sense of common men. They are taken as they are understood, only in a popular acceptance, at what may be called their exchangeable value in the market of the world. The societies neither promise, like the Disciples, to forsake all other pursuits, to suspend all other duties, to make a personal abandonment which must of itself prove public ruin, and destroy that credit and influence which we wish to possess for the purposes of the test:—nor, on the other extreme, do they make any rhetorical flourish. They simply and sincerely promise, that by their own exertions, and by any influence they may have on others, they will co-operate in attaining a particular end, according to their different talents and opportunities, and as

far as is compatible with other necessary duties, a condition so plainly implied that it is needless to express it. If hereafter there should be *no* exertion on their part, or if their actions do not correspond with their words, the public, whom they have attested to the consistency of their conduct, must be their judge; and the condemnation of that public is the penalty they must suffer. The test is a standard of measurement which they give to the public, in order to facilitate this judgment. *Without* such a test, "every one may indeed use as little exertion as he pleases," because there is none to whom he stands pledged, not even to himself; whereas this test forms not only a public record which *obliges* him to exertion, if he has any regard to public opinion, but it is a record on the soul, an external conscience which stimulates to duty, and fixes and embodies fugitive resolution. *All our abilities* is a phrase neither taken in its loosest nor in its strictest sense, and there is room enough to rest safely between the horns of this dilemma. It is taken by the people in a popular sense, and they refer the derivative sense, and the philosophic sense, to the college or the cloister.

2. IN the same manner, the author of this bilious publication extracts every sense out of the word *impartial*, except the obvious one. This term is evidently suggested by, and is solely referable to, that religious persuasion which is at present most *partially* excluded from civil rights, as the word *adequate* relates to a representation in Parliament, justly proportioned to the end in view—the happiness of the *whole* people. "*Impartial*" is a plain word, expressive of a practical truth, that no government can satisfy our wishes which is not equitable, free from regard to party or persuasion, equal in its distributions, alike to all; and he who interprets the term in any far-fetched sense, or involves any speculative questions in its meaning, is only catching at a star and stumbling over straws. The test turns its attention, merely, in the term made use of, to that monstrous partiality which excommunicates and exiles a whole people, without one overt act on their part to justify such oppression; and were this prominent partiality done away, other speculative questions, like those alluded to, *might* come under political discussion, which need not *now* be answered, as they are not *now* in contemplation. Even on



the supposition of their being agitated at present, I cannot think the term *impartial* could ever be found inapplicable; but it is enough to repeat, that the word is here plainly applied to the Roman Catholics, who have found in government nothing but grievance, and in law, nothing but penalty. He says "*that we are bound to one object exclusively of every other pursuit*"—a most palpable misstatement, as I have proved before.

3. THE test pledges those who take it to endeavour as much as in them lies, "to forward a brotherhood of affection, an identity of interests, a communion of rights, and an union of power, among Irishmen of all religious persuasions." The verb, to forward, which is connected with all this portion of the test, has been wholly overlooked by this gentleman, and if attended to must comprehend and conciliate all parties. The end in view is a reform impartial and adequate. The four articles common affection, common interests, common rights and common exertion, (the true meaning of "*union of power*," not that which the author strains from it) are the means immediately to be put in train for attaining this end, the four wheels which are to carry us progressively to the goal, to perfect equality of rights, interests, franchises and privileges; resisting any ascendancy of party in the common-weal, is declared to be a measure necessary to and implied in an adequate representation. If that object be desirable to-morrow, the means must be put in forwardness to-day; but many things prove, and among the rest the stile and sentiments of this paper, that we are still far from having a brotherhood of affection, that an interested attachment to sects takes place of social union, and that a part is in the consideration, of many, greater than the whole. Under this impression (not only distant from the goal, but the wheels broken) we lament, that a system of legal and constitutional equality is at present impracticable, that some plan of penurious policy will take its place; yet this test engages us never to lose sight of the complete redemption of the nation, and as we value the end, to forward the means with unremitting activity. Did complete enfranchisement take place this instant, there could not happen for a long time an equality of political power, the acquisition of which must in its nature depend on the gradual acquisition of property, and therefore

be gradual itself. As the Catholic landlord influences his Protestant tenantry, the Protestant landlords must still have influence over theirs, proportioned to the overplus of property in their hands at present; and during this interval, the mental subjection complained of, tho' by no means justly, must disappear. But it is laughable to hear this gentleman forming his ratios between the political power of the Catholics and Presbyterians, as if the latter had a share in the government to give away; as if their clergy had contrived to erase the word Protestant, and put *Presbyterian* ascendancy in its place; as if they were not themselves fed by royal bounty; as if there was any national government; as if the people had any controul over established legislators, established judges, and established clergy. Whatever the Presbyterian clergy may sigh for, the laity are pretty unanimous in wishing for the SOVEREIGNTY OF THE PEOPLE, NOT OF ANY PARTY; THE ASCENDANCY OF CHRISTIANITY, NOT OF ANY CHURCH: but what should be condemned is that hauteur which this gentleman and others assume in speaking of the Catholics, when there is little difference between them, when the nation is unrepresented, and when every law is truly penal which usurps a right, and confirms the usurpation.—We must all knock at the door of our *excellent* constitution, and if *we* are to gain admission to the rights of man, why should not *they*?—We have no constitution to give or grant, but must strive to get one. By ourselves we strove in vain, and we must now strive all together.

“Tho' they should change their minds before they have obtained it;”—these words must mean, that tho' before the attainment of a reform, we should perceive the danger of a communion of rights, yet by the Test, we should still be bound to procure it. Not at all.—The Test binds to two things, adequate reform, and communion of rights; and should it appear, that the latter would be destructive of the former, as it would in that case be impossible to procure them *conjointly*, one must *necessarily* be relinquished; which should give way, the *end* or the *means*, is plain, and in this case the society is not only justifiable but bound to change its mind, as well as the prosecution of their plan in some of its parts.

4. The Test, it is said, obliges men always to retain the same opinion. I deny the assertion. It is merely to make conduct conformable to this profession of principles. I voluntarily took the Test, because the truths contained in it appear to me so indubitable that the whole frame of my mind must be changed before I change my opinion. This change is by no means impossible, but it is so highly improbable, that acting as every man must do on high probability, I do not hesitate to pledge myself to my country that my conduct shall coincide with my declarations; and if so improbable a thing should happen as a change of opinion, I should not hesitate to declare openly that alteration, and throw myself on the verdict of my country whom I have attested as witnesses, and whom I appeal to as judge. I should in like manner engage to continue a christian, tho' it is possible my future belief in that doctrine may be shaken. When the National Assembly of France even *swear* that they will support the constitution as established in 90 and 91, are they obliged for ever to retain the same opinion of that constitution as they do at present. The Test is solely meant to bind a man from altering his conduct when he does *not* change his opinion, to prevent him paltering with his conscience, and prevent his tergiversation. If a man really, and bona fide changes his opinion, no test, nor no oath could be binding; and if his conduct be the same when his principles are changed, he must sin to his conscience, and is perjured in that case, not for breaking his oath, but for keeping it. No oath could be taken without an exception of this kind, for he who swears that he will always be of the same opinion, swears to an impossibility. If our declaration continues without disavowal on our part, and our conduct contradicts it, we stand falsified to the public: if our principles change and our actions do not change along with them, we are condemned by our conscience.

5. The stile of this Test is said to be declamatory, full of point and antithesis. I cannot discover through the whole one sentence that is not substantial: one figure of rhetoric, one pointed stroke, or one contrast of words and sentiments which creates an antithesis. To assert indeed that two nu-

merous societies "with the best views and the noblest purposes," would voluntarily and deliberately form, take, tender, and adhere to an "*ensnaring*" oath, "the composition of a jesuitical, rhetorical, or enthusiastic mind, leading to intolerance and spiritual pride, and naturally engendering petulance and rage, low intrigue, and disingenuous artifice," is not merely a verbal antithesis. It is an antithesis of the heart. It is—but let me restrain myself. He is my countryman—*perhaps* my friend. How can I make use of the weapons of invective, when in the opposite ranks I think I see a brother?—The Test is sufficiently definite and precise for the common acceptance of many sensible and ingenuous men; and the numbers that have taken, and are daily taking it, sufficiently prove that it is so. It is not in the power of words to satisfy a lawyer or a logician. One multiplies words, and the other splits meaning, until a plain head is bewildered, and a candid heart is disgusted. The stile of the test is a trifle.—Are the sentiments just?—Is its spirit honest?

6. THE United Irishmen would certainly vote for immediate and universal enfranchisement to the Catholics; but if prejudices be still so strong as to make total emancipation impracticable, and that all the people of Ireland cannot as yet enjoy by law, what they are entitled to by nature, by merit, and by sufferings; the societies will still congratulate their Catholic brethren that their load has been lightened, that their deliverance is only protracted, and they will felicitate themselves, in having been, as they will be, in the misfortunes of their countrymen, faithful allies; in their prosperity (if it should arrive) rejoicing friends. They, indeed, would make no terms with such a system of proscription; nor enter into any composition with an evil principle, abhorring as they do, that manichean policy which gives equal sway to the divine genius of the constitution and to the demon of destruction.

FAR from temporizing expedients, or from allowing *penal law* to debauch the spirit of that constitution, they would eject the incongruous and contradictory phrase from its very language. Far from huckstring the rights of man, or forestalling the bounties of God, they would like that divine word

which said, let there be light, and chaos became order ; proclaim, let there be liberty throughout the land, and the present confusion would be peace. No. Not a perchance of persecution should remain, not a suggestion to intolerance, not a torpid statute which might find in the breast of any bigot heat and venom. If this people really be as they are described, let open war be made on them ; raze their habitations and sow salt around them ; but if they be misrepresented, let no awkward and bungling compromise be made with such ruinous error, nor let the public mind and capacity be kept a sterile swamp, as long as foreign influence and interest may think proper to retard its cultivation. Had this brotherhood of affection, sameness of interest, union of rights and of exertion been proposed and prosecuted 50 years ago, the present would be a prouder day for Ireland, but still its adoption now may anticipate half a century the consummation of civil and political religious freedom — Our eyes may still see our country thrice blest before they close for ever. Much progress in the conversion of the Protestant mind to sound political justice, and public morality, has been made in a very short time, and the objections offered to comprehending the Catholics in the constitution, are such as strike most at first sight, but the effect of all reasoning and consideration on the subject, has been to lessen the first impression.

7. THE test is not an oath, nor are the terms convertible. It is not an oath, because neither they who take it, nor the public, to whom it is addressed, understand it as an oath. No man can be "*entrapped*" by giving a simple exposition of the principles which he maintained *before* his entrance into the society, and which if he does not maintain, he is unfit to be a member. There is always a medium between the extremes of this gentleman, and he would push us thro' the river while the bridge is just beside us. This test is a serious, manly manifestation to our country and to the world, of our political principles and our intended practice.

It is the essence of an oath to refer immediately to the divinity. In the one, we invoke the vengeance of God as the penalty. In the other, we resign ourselves to the judgment of the public. The breach of the one is perjury. That



of the other, notorious political inconsistency. The one has the seal of religion impressed on it. The other is a permanent symbol, a *civil* bond of attachment to each other, and to a common cause, done in a solemn manner, and with a meaning and effect beyond the obligation of a mere promise. There is plainly a gradation and scale of obligation, or we could not think that God would punish more severely the breach of an oath than that of a promise. There may be a promise—a protestation—verbal—written—a test—and an oath the strictest tie of all.

It is said, that the test will bind an upright man as strictly as his oath, and so will his bare promise; but it is not the less true, that in general opinion, a test of this kind is as much a superior obligation to a promise, as it is inferior to an oath; and in forming societies we must take the world generally, not individually. A test without having either the sanctions, or incurring the penalties of an oath, takes a much stronger hold of the mind and memory, than mere nominal subscription, often forgotten, sometimes contradicted. It belts in a Society better, and gives it greater energy. Instead of a mind, unassimilated, aggregate, beaten out to a large surface, without strength or cohesion, it compresses into a solid mass. Without it, there was, as there would be, volition without, and zeal without, activity. I am very sensible that strong attractions generate strong antipathies; but may not too much nicety and fastidiousness of conduct, or of criticism, have worse effects, by cutting the mind off from the active, living mass, wrapping it up in a sort of sullen insulation, and changing to a pillar of salt, what was a pillar of society.

THE gentleman concludes, and pins the web of sophistry by confounding the effects of *religious creeds* and confessions, imposed by human authority, usurping the rights of God, with an engagement purely *civil*, *voluntarily* entered into between man and man; and by suborning the principles of Protestant Dissenters to give evidence against their present most honourable conduct as men and citizens.

I CONCLUDE by saying, that the author of this paper deserves much greater credit for his courage, than his pru-

dence; and I think much the same of him as of Ifadas, to whom the Ephori decreed a crown in honour of the valour he had displayed, but imposed on him a heavy fine, for having fought without either *shield or buckler*.

FEBRUARY 21, 1792.

## STRICTURE

No. II.

### ON THE TEST OF THE UNITED IRISHMEN;

\* \* IT will be necessary in reading the following Strictures, to observe that those words or paragraphs which are in *italics*,—SMALL CAPITALS, or CAPITALS, are quotations either from the test itself, or from the defence of it published on the 21st ult.

ΟΡΚΟΝ παραιτησai, εἰ μὲν οἶσθ τε, εἰς αὐτῶν;  
εἰ δὲ μὴ, ἐκ τῶν ἐνόντων.

ΕΠΙΚΤΕΤ. Enchir. 44.

*Avoid an oath, if possible, altogether; if not, as far as you can.*

THIS test is an instrument, calculated to affect the sentiments and conduct of the nation on a very important question. Its structure and tendency should therefore be freely and minutely examined: and though it may be impossible to criticise it without some reference to the mind which conceived it, and the hands which put it in motion, it must nevertheless be discussed. Truth must never be sacrificed out of tenderness to error. It has accordingly been taken to pieces. It has been demonstrated that if understood in a *literal* sense, it is absurd, immoral, and ineffective. This sense is therefore not only given up by its advocates, but eagerly disclaimed. Nay, an attempt to give it this construction has been styled captious and absurd. This is what the writer of the strictures expected and waited for. He

wished to know whether this interpretation would be abandoned, before he proceeded to complete his plan. He has now ascertained, that the most zealous friends of this engagement, relinquish the grammatical signification; and that he may, without interruption, attempt to show, that in its *rhetorical* sense, it is nugatory and fallacious.

THE rhetorical sense of an oath is such a ludicrous idea, that he would not use the expression could he find another to describe the construction now given to the test; but when he considers the capricious significations which its interpreters have imposed on the plainest words, he must think, that they have been swearing by trope and figure.

WE are now taught—

1st. THAT a test taken *in the presence of God* is not as *strict a tie*, nor consequently as obligatory as an oath.

2d. THAT by this engagement a man is bound to use only as much of his abilities and influence as he can spare.

3d. THAT an *impartial reform* is synonymous with a *partial* one, and may exclude a great majority of the free agents of the Irish nation (even leaseholders for 999 years) provided it include Roman Catholic freeholders.

4th. THAT AN UNION OF POWER *among Irishmen of all religious persuasions* signifies only *common exertion*, and that though this is *a means of IMMEDIATE necessity*, it is only to be *for-warded PROGRESSIVELY on four wheels*; or, as it was lately expressed, *from time to time, as speedily as the circumstances of the country and the welfare of the whole kingdom will permit.*

5th. THAT the test does not *oblige men always to retain the same opinion*; that they are, consequently, bound only while they are taking it: because they may change their opinions the next moment, in which case, *no test, no oath can bind them*; that many, perhaps all, may have changed their minds, and consequently at this day neither their associates nor their country can depend upon their engagement.

AND, 6th, that *if before the attainment of a reform, we should perceive the danger of a communion of rights*, the Catholics may be left in the lurch, consistently with this test.

WITH the help of these data, let us now paraphrase this Highgate oath, agreeably to the mental reservations of one of the United Irishmen and its ablest defender.

*I, A. B. do not swear, but merely, in the presence of God, pledge myself to my country, that, till I think better of it, I will use as much of my abilities and influence as I can spare in the attainment of a partial, which I deem an adequate representation of the Irish nation in Parliament : and as a means of absolute and IMMEDIATE necessity, in the establishment of this chief good of Ireland, I will, unless I change my mind, endeavour as much as lies in my inclination, to FORWARD PROGRESSIVELY a brotherhood of affection, an identity of interest, a communion of rights, and a common exertion among Irishmen of all religious persuasions ; without which every reform in Parliament must be partial—and, any thing herein contained to the contrary notwithstanding, I pledge myself in the presence of God, that no partial reform can be national, but must be inadequate to the wants, delusive to the wishes, and insufficient for the happiness and freedom of this country.*

THIS seems to be the spirit of the oath ; but be it construed as it will, it cannot answer any valuable purpose. There are but three ends, that such an engagement can be intended to answer—security to one's self—to his associates—or to his country.

I. WITH regard to the person himself, I admit that the phraseology of an oath is of little importance. It is an affair between him and his Maker, who are both acquainted with the real intention. But at the same time it is altogether unnecessary to express his sentiments by words, to him who searcheth the heart. Though the style, however, be a consideration of no moment, the purposes to which we bind ourselves should be carefully scrutinized : and their character has been well expressed in these words—*the truths contained in the oath or vow should appear to be so indubitable, that the whole*

*frame of my mind must be changed before I can change my opinion.* Now men who have had much commerce with wise men, or with themselves, will admit, that such truths are not very numerous; and that as few of them belong to the class of politics as to any other branch of knowledge. As a remarkable instance of this truth, I shall quote some lines from a work, which I esteem the most exquisite morsel of genius and eloquence that this island can boast; as I esteem the reputed author to be the most eminent ornament and ablest advocate, decus & tutamen, of the Catholic cause. If such a person has changed, as, I am well informed, he has, which of the United Irishmen will pretend to be immutable? \* [See note.] Such a vow is therefore altogether unnecessary and precipitate. If there be any danger of a change of opinion, it is rash; if there be none, it is plainly superfluous.

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ORELLANA, 5TH LETTER.

\* THE great misfortune of the Catholic religion in this country arises from this circumstance, that there is little or no distinction of rank among its professors, and of consequence few men of weight and estimation to sweeten that leaven of intolerance and persecution, which in other persuasions is not perhaps less in quantity, but is well *tempered* by numbers in the middle and superior ranks of life; who gently instil into the minds of those beneath them the milk of human nature.—It is chiefly on this account that the Catholics at this day are absolutely INCAPABLE of making a good use of political liberty, or what is the same thing, of political power. I speak the sentiments of the most enlightened among them, and I assert it as a fact, that the most able men in that body are too wise to wish for a COMPLETE extension of civil franchises to those of their own persuasion; and the reason is, because they well know that it must require the process of time to enlarge their minds and meliorate their hearts into a *capability* of enjoying the blessing of freedom. I do not think it at all surprising that an enlightened Catholic, on seeing his Protestant brother almost certain of possessing a reform, should exclaim with Esau, “is there not

[The answer to the *Strictures* is supposed to have been written by the author of *Orellana*.]



2. It is equally vain to imagine, that a rhetorical, vague, and declamatory form of words, requiring so much ingenious explanation, and liable to be understood in such a variety of senses, can give any assurance even to associates. It can never prevent a man from altering his conduct when he does NOT change his opinion—for if he be capable of acting contrary to his principles, he will make no scruple of belying his opinion, or pretending to change it: especially as he has been taught that his declaration does *not* refer immediately to the Deity, who is the sole witness of his dissimulation, but to his country, from whom he can conceal it: that he *does not* invoke the vengeance of God, but simply resigns himself to the judgment of the public, who know nothing of the matter: and that his crime is not perjury, but secret political inconsistency.

3. Now if a man may slip out of this noose without the knowledge of his associates, how can an engagement from which he is at liberty to swerve upon every change of opinion, respecting very nice and difficult questions, give any security or assurance to his country.

THIS oath, then, is not calculated to answer any one good purpose; but, like all other engagements of this kind, it has a lamentable efficacy in fomenting bigotry, and banishing liberal and enlightened men from every society in which it is imposed. It seems to inspire those who have taken it with a notion that they are the chosen few, from whom alone their

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one blessing left?—Bless me, even me also, O! my country;" but when that same man considers calmly his situation, he resigns himself to the sentence of fate, and *for a time* is content to serve his brother. May that time be made a short one, by their own laudable exertions! May the light of true science illuminate their minds and soften their hearts! May the gradual diffusion of property, while it ingrafts their affections upon the soil which supports them, communicate at the same time a spirit to maintain what their industry has acquired; give them self-estimation, conscious dignity, and, in short, that republicanism of soul which will announce to the world that the people who possess it are stamped by the hand of Heaven, heirs of independence!

country can hope for redemption, and that political orthodoxy is confined within the pale of their society. They should consider, that whatever may be thought of their intentions, these associations are condemned and shunned by those who formerly gave incontestible proof of wisdom and patriotism; that many of the most enlightened and liberal men in the nation think they have greatly injured the Catholic cause; and that, by the precipitate and unqualified manner in which they have forced the question, they have awakened antipathies and prejudices which had slept for 50 years. To come nearer home, they have exposed the Protestant Dissenters of Ulster to gross misrepresentation and groundless calumny—they have nearly annihilated the honourable and useful influence which the town of Belfast maintained in the adjacent country; and if the justly popular candidate for the representation of the county of Antrim, shall meet with any serious opposition—or if the union and independence of the county shall be endangered, it will be owing to the violence and imprudence of those who attempted to connect the independent interest with the Roman Catholic question.

NOTWITHSTANDING their monopoly of philanthropy, the writer of these strictures must say, that no man wishes more ardently for the time, when the good of the whole kingdom will admit of a complete coalition among its inhabitants.—No man more zealously exclaims—

“ Qui finis erit discordiarum?—Ecquando communem hanc esse Patriam licebit?”

When shall our dissensions have an end?—When may we consider this as our common country?—March 2, 1792.

† ISADAS.

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† ISADAS was a Spartan—who, though he fought naked, “without shield or buckler,” against an enemy armed at all points, returned victorious and *without a wound*, after exerting himself to save his country from being ruined in *one day* by a host of *Bæotians*.

## ANSWER.

## No. II.

TO THE CONTINUATION OF  
 STRICTURES ON THE TEST OF  
 THE SOCIETIES OF UNITED IRISHMEN.

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"THE coat is without seam, woven from the top throughout, let us not rent it"—*"In veste varietas sit, scissura non sit."*

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THE continuation of Strictures on the Test, adds a new colour, but no new light to the subject. After having darkened plain meaning by verbal criticism, it is now made to assume the glare of rhetoric; and the dextrous hand only shifts the prism which splits the beam of truth. All that is said here has been better said before, and it is only necessary to place one paraphrase opposite to another in order to correct palpable misrepresentation.

"I, A. B. *do not swear, but merely* in presence of God, pledge myself to my county, *and take it to witness*, that, until *I shall really and truly think differently on the subject*, I will use as much of my abilities and influence, *as I can spare from my other necessary and important concerns*, in the attainment of a representation of the Irish nation in Parliament, impartial, *with respect to all religious distinctions*, and adequate, *with respect to the body of the people at large*; and as a means of absolute and immediate necessity, in the establishment of this chief good of Ireland, I will, *unless I really and in truth change my conviction on the subject*, endeavour, as much as lies in my ability, to forward progressively, a brotherhood of affection, an identity of interest, a communion of rights, and a joint exertion among Irishmen of all religious persuasions; without which, any reform in Parliament must be partial; and nothing herein contained being to the contrary, I pledge myself, in the same presence, that it is my opinion, that no partial reform can be national, but must be inadequate to the wants, delusive to the wishes, and insufficient for the freedom and happiness of this

country."—The term "*immediate*" is plainly applied to that *necessity* which is certainly absolute and urgent, tho' the brotherhood of affection can *not* be *immediately* accomplished, but only progressively forwarded.

THIS continuation seems written to pay a compliment, and to fix an imputation—"Commendatio ex injuria."—To that imputation of inconsistency, it seems only necessary to reply—

I. THE circumstances of the times, as well as persons, have changed, in the very manner wished for, and the mind must change along with them.—To commercial interest, a middle and mediating rank has rapidly grown up in the Catholic community, and produced that enlargement of mind, that energy of character, and that self-dependence which men acquire whose interests do not hang at the mercy of this or that individual, but on general and necessary consumptions. Will any person assert that such men are not as well qualified to exercise civil franchise as the most of our 40s. Protestant freeholders, whose corruption is in reality occasioned by the unjust partition of political power, and who are tempted to convert their monopoly into money, because its partial distribution has given it an artificial value much beyond what nature and reason allow it. The unjust detention of liberty from others, operates as a curse and a blast upon those who have hoarded the common good. It rots in their possession. It corrupts when not partaken; and he who has more than his exact share of freedom, becomes in one situation of life a tyrant, and in another, degenerates and putrifies into a slave. It is the judgment of God on all nations and all men who presume to appropriate his gifts, and to make of right a privilege or a prerogative. The Catholic mind has cast off its *feudality*, and that person would in truth be inconsistent who kept prejudice as it were at nurse, when by nearer approach and closer acquaintance, he finds in that body a nationality of sentiment, and a fidelity in engagement, demanding respect and admiration; while he knows it to be his general duty as it is his dear delight, to foster the spirit of

freedom wherever it may be found, especially in the breasts of his countrymen.

2. It is in reality the *civil* incapacity which has made and must continue the *moral* incapacity. It is the will to be free, which makes the capability; and the first sigh that the heart sends forth for liberty is a sufficient indication of potency to enjoy it. To affect a wish for their ability to possess freedom, while you continue the penal code which makes them incapable, is cruel mockery. A capacity for freedom is as natural to man as a capacity to eat or to drink: it is an instinct of nature, not a consequence of education. Man is often indeed the creature of habit, and he may learn to be a slave, as he may learn to drink alcohol and to eat as-a-fœtida, but you will never break him of these bad customs by degrees; it is only by giving a complete wrench of the mind to an opposite direction. The doctrine of natural rights is plain, simple, commonsensical; and the practical enjoyment of them requires no tuition, nor any course of adoption. Rights most unjustly have been converted into favours derived from the gratuitous lenity of government, and are now to be purchased as a licence; when it was solely for their plenary enjoyment that men entered into civil society.—Magna Charta need not be taught like the principles of Newton, and the rights of personal security, personal freedom, private property, the right of defending them, and of electing a trustee to watch over and protect them from undefined privilege or unlimited prerogative, require neither literature to feel their value, nor any reach of mind to exercise them with judgment and prudence. In a state of nature we should know them well, and Government has too often been only a means and an art to render and keep us ignorant of fundamental rights and of our primary duties.

What has Hadas done? He has confounded the test with the institution—He has damped as far as in him lay, the first happy effort to make an union of heads and hearts in this distracted country. He has held out the town of Belfast as a spot of schism and discord, when in reality, there is an evident correspondence of opinion, and he has concluded with an empty wish and an helpless exclamation.



Is Belfast in a state of civil discord? Does every man carry a torch and a mask? Or is it only such papers as these which kindle disunion, and have *crested* that division which they did *not* find? Does neighbour visit neighbour as usual, or do they toss about at random injurious epithets; and has the union of parties in every other place been, there, converted into a brand of contention? I feel for the honor of a town which always steps forward from the ranks of their countrymen, in the ardour of a good cause and in the courageous spirit of freedom. \* I feel for the social character of a place which has hitherto been like a large family, never known to let religious or political differences excite personal pique or private animosity: I vindicate its *unanimity* on the Catholic question; and I maintain that had not the town gone as far as it did, there would not have been merely comparative difference, but positive disunion; not the difference between thus far and still farther; but the opposition between advancing at all, and standing still. There are now but shades of distinction, and all hasten to the same goal with different degrees of celerity; but there might have been a division of the town into three real not two nominal parties, and one of these parties actively inimical to the very cause which is now made a *common* one—Belfast is therefore as united as ever, and were any ingenious gentleman to say the contrary, and to add, that it is losing its importance in the province by asserting the cause of the nation, or that its care for the happiness of Ireland will hazard its influence at a county election, no inhabitant of Belfast should on this account lose his temper, but should only bow, and say—Sir—you are a *stranger*.

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\* If the people of Belfast are to be denominated Bæotians, I should resemble them to the sacred battalion of that people, which always led the way in the battles of Greece, a band of friends inseparably united, and pledged to each other.—Philip destroyed this cohort: and seeing them stretched on the field of battle, covered with honourable wounds, and lying side by side on the ground where they had been stationed, he wept, and the tears of the tyrant bore a testimony to their virtue and their valour.

THE United Societies are a discovery in national policy, most auspicious to RADICAL REFORM, and the horror with which administration views them, is the best proof of their value to Ireland. What the Catholics have obtained from the English Minister, has, I assert, been owing to their formation; and what the Catholics have to obtain, will be accelerated by their continuance. To reject and condemn the whole on account of the restrictions which some of them have adopted, is to reason illogically; and to throw cold water upon this pure and patriotic flame, will only serve, I trust, to make it burn more strongly and more clearly. Men will not hang loosely on society, but unite together; and what is now merely a number, will become a nation.

I have done with this altercation. *Plus animi est inferenti periculum quam propulsanti.*—I shall only repeat, that according to the doctrine of Isadas, none could take a Test, none could make an oath, but that being who swears by himself and whose counsel is immutable. With respect to inconsistency in the pamphleteer of 1784, the irregularity of motion is apparent, rather than real. It is not in the body moved, but in the eye that perceives it. To a person placed in the frigid and unsocial Saturn, the planets appear now stationary, now progressive, and now retrograde. Yet the motion of the most insignificant among them is simple, regular, uniform, progressive. He sails calm and serene thro' the pacific ocean of ether, and keeps close to the sun of truth, from which he derives his light and which guides his rotation.

A BÆOTIAN.

MARCH 20, 1792.

## No. III.

CONCLUSION OF THE STRICTURES,  
ON THE TEST OF THE UNITED IRISHMEN.

THE original meaning of the Test has been abandoned ; and its new sense is not worth an attack or a defence. In the course of repeated distillations its spirit has evaporated. It was at first poisonous—'tis now vapid. This portentous meteor has proved to be nothing more than a *Will with a Wisp*, an innocent display of electrical light ; following and alarming those who fly ; shrinking from him that would grasp it ; and answering no other purpose than to lead men into the mire. The Test, then, I leave to its fate ; and let the Irish Bards, on their expected meeting at Belfast, sing its requiem,

————— et magna supremum voce ciere.

Sic ô sic positum ————

————— æternâ pace quiescat.

WITH regard to the concluding paragraphs of the paper signed a Bæotian, let two or three observations suffice.

PREVIOUS to 1778, some progress had been made in relieving the Roman Catholics. In that year considerable immunities were granted. From that period till 1784, they were incorporated with the Protestant Volunteers. Yet they continued, in the opinion of Orellana, who wrote in that year, incapable of liberty. But strange to tell ! since Parliament suspended its good offices, since the Volunteers in the Roman Catholic Provinces laid down their arms, they have, as it were by magic, *acquired an enlargement of mind, and an energy of character, and are as well qualified to exercise the Elective Franchise, as most of the Protestant forty shilling freeholders.*—The fact I am not now disputing. I never thought it the hinge of the controversy. I only note the inconsistency.

AGAIN—though the Catholics continued incapable in 1784, we are assured, that *it is the will to be free that makes the capability ; the first sigh that the heart sends forth for liberty is a sufficient indication of potency to enjoy it.* The conclusion is, that till 1784,

the Catholics had never formed a wish, or sent forth a sigh for liberty. But enough of this. The lion in the net became an object of pity even to the mouse.

LASTLY—I am blamed for having insinuated, that a diversity of opinion prevails in Belfast, and blabbed a secret known to 20,000 people. Two hundred and fifty persons, including, with very few exceptions, all the inhabitants, who had ever distinguished themselves by abilities, and patriotic exertion, signed a counter-declaration to a petition, subscribed by six hundred. The first club of United Irishmen, we are now told, differed from both : from the minority, because they voted against them ; from the petition for immediate and universal enfranchisement, because they are sworn to forward the means of reform progressively ; and if the means be progressive, the end cannot be immediate.—Among those who signed the petition, some subscribed it for the sake of unanimity, others on the principle of a sturdy beggar, asking too much in order to obtain something.—Lastly—there are many individuals who do not approve of any further communication of privilege. Notwithstanding all this, I should, it seems, have assured the public, that the town was unanimous ; and as I have *not* done it, my ingenious correspondent steps in, and *vindicates the unanimity of Belfast on the Catholic Question*.

I DESPISE the quackery of a political empiric. A regular state physician would not disguise the nature of the complaint ; but would watch its symptoms and investigate its proximate cause. This he would find to be a morbid secretion, of an inflammatory nature, occasioning an abscess and threatening a mortification. He would discover, that all the pus and virus of the body politic, instead of being diluted by the milder juices, and circulating innocently through the frame, have been collected into one part, and are likely to induce fever and indicate dissolution. In other words, that a part of the community have been secluding themselves from the wise and temperate, and, lest they should be disturbed by such intruders, have established a Test to exclude every man that would be disposed to enlighten their darkness or moderate their violence.

I MUST still insist, that with regard to the Emancipation of the Roman Catholics, my sentiments are not less liberal than those of the United Irishmen. The difference consists in our modes of operation. I would undermine prejudices and antipathies by sap; they would carry them by storm. With respect to their societies too, I have never wished to impeach their intentions: I have only questioned their wisdom. I never attempted to fix a stain on the principles of any of their members—some of them I hold in the highest estimation, and have been happy in calling my friends. In commencing this controversy, I sacrificed my feelings to a sense of duty—but when once enaged,—I determined not to flint my cause. In this line I have persevered, though sensible that the *Esprit de Corps* has an unhappy effect in perverting the most amiable minds, clouding the best understanding, and misrepresenting the most innocent expressions.

I too have done with this altercation. I hope neither party will have any *more last words*. And I conclude with the words of a wise man,

“ Faithful are the *wounds* of a *friend*:

“ But the *kisses* of an *enemy* are deceitful.

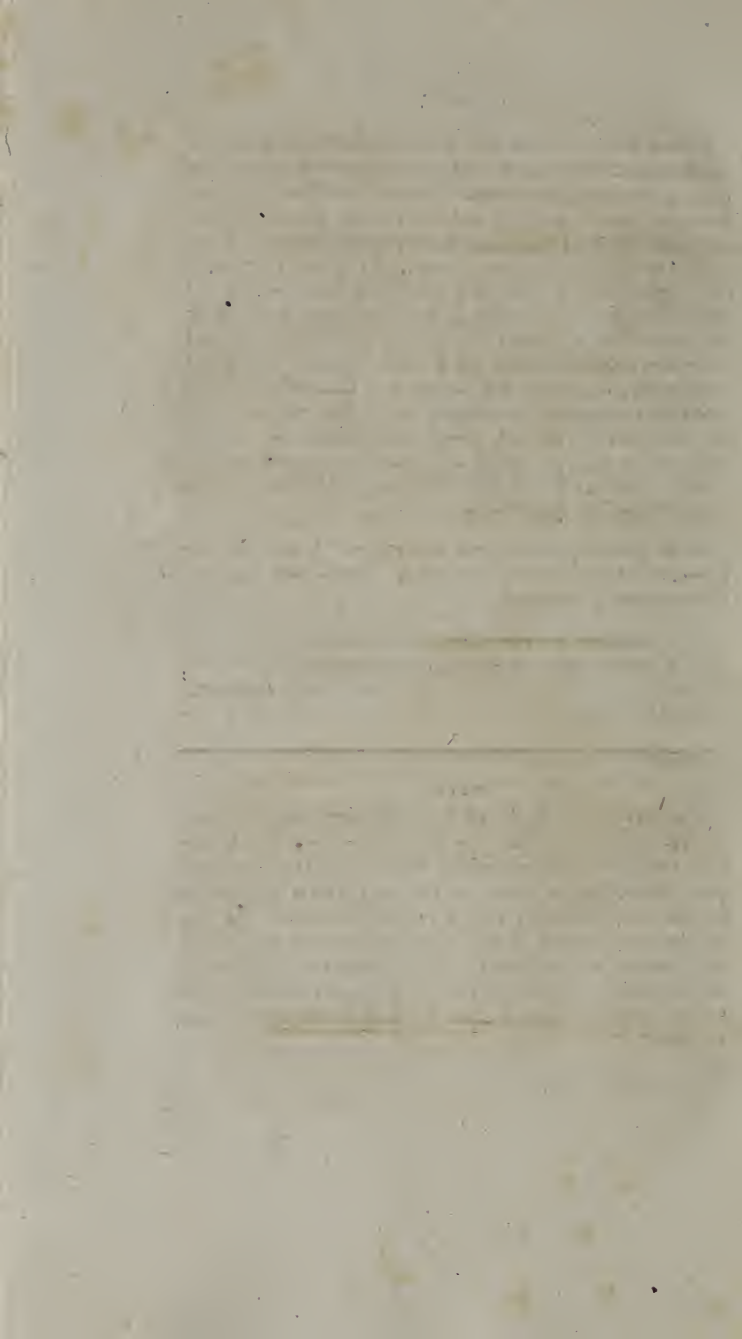
ISADAS.

March 27, 1792.

#### NOTE.

A REMARK made in the 1st No. of the foregoing *Strictures*, p. 144. viz. that the test was “the composition of a jesuitical, a rhetorical, or an enthusiastic mind,” is said to have given great offence to the author of the test; who is supposed to be the gentleman who replied to the *Strictures*. But the Editor is authorized to say, that the intention with which those words were written has been greatly misapprehended. This misapprehension, however, will account and apologize for any asperity which may be observed in the sequel of the argument.





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THOUGHTS  
ON THE  
BRITISH CONSTITUTION.

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"I feel a secret pride in thinking that I was born a Briton;  
"when I consider that the ROMANS, those masters of  
"the world, maintained their liberty little more than  
"seven centuries; and that BRITAIN, which was a free  
"nation above seventeen hundred years ago, is so at  
"this hour."

OLDCASTLE.

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T O  
*JAMES EARL OF CHARLEMONT,*  
THE ASSERTOR  
OF THE  
RIGHTS OF IRELAND,  
AND  
GENERAL OF ITS VOLUNTEER ARMY,  
A FRIEND OF THE JUST PREROGATIVES OF THE CROW  
AN ORNAMENT OF THE PEERAGE,  
AND  
PATRON OF A PARLIAMENTARY REFORM,  
THESE ESSAYS ARE INSCRIBED;  
WITH THE  
DIFFIDENCE SUITED TO THEIR IMPERFECTIONS,  
AND THE  
RESPECT DUE TO HIS LORDSHIP'S VIRTUES,  
AND  
LITERARY ATTAINMENTS.

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THOUGHTS  
ON THE BRITISH CONSTITUTION.

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No. I.

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THE British Government is the only one in the annals of mankind that has aimed at the diffusion of Liberty through a multitude of People, spread over a wide extent of territory."

MILLAR'S HISTORICAL VIEW.

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Thus was the present Constitution of our Government forming itself, for about two centuries and an half; a rough building raised out of the demolitions which the Normans had made, and upon the solid foundations laid by the Saxons. The whole fabric was cemented by the blood of our fathers; for the British Liberties are not the grant of Princes. They are original rights, conditions of original contracts, coequal with prerogative, and coæval with our Government."

OLDCASTLE.

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BELFAST, DEC. 6TH, 1792.

AT a period when REPUBLICS are exhibited as models of perfection, I am persuaded it is consistent with the spirit of a free press, to recommend the principles of the BRITISH CONSTITUTION. Though I reprobate whatever is unsound in our representation, which is too much the offspring of depopulated and corrupt boroughs, I am equally averse to unmixed democracy, for a country rooted in its love of limited monarchy. If the first is the origin of extravagance and rapacity,

it admits of a cure : while the latter excels rather in speculation than practice, and points to scenes of confusion from which a good mind turns with horror.

WITH a fair representation of the people in Parliament, there would not I conceive be a Constitution on the earth comparable to the British : Let its theory be realized, and we shall seek in vain for another of such intrinsic excellence.

IN contrasting it with the creations of yesterday, we must recollect that the seeds of decay are laid in every production, whether of nature or of art ; that the most captivating forms of Government are not exempted from the common lot ; and that the great searcher, time, alone can try their virtues or defects. In the vegetable world however, we find that the slower growths give the most solid timber ; so in forms of civil polity, those which are the forced productions of a day, are neither best calculated for present use nor lasting existence.

It would be an easy task to trace the downfall of tyranny in FRANCE, to an emulation of British liberty among our Gallic neighbours. The admiration in which the essence of our Constitution was held by MONTESQUIEU, VOLTAIRE and ROUSSEAU, operated in fostering the love of liberty and undermining the false principles of the old monarchy.

WITH such innate vigour is this Constitution endued, that in spite of its corruptions it preserved the trial by jury many centuries after it was lost to other countries ; and at this day secures the freedom of the press in a degree unknown in any former period.

AMERICA did not acquire her love of liberty in the new world, but carried it out from the old.—In forming a Constitution for herself, she retained several of the finest branches of the British, lopping off with a careful hand what she deemed excesses that had formed round the parent stem. The first appointment of a Sovereign, even a Washington, to a throne, would at his decease prove the source of jealousies without end : but she wisely created a Senate, and its good effects have been fully experienced. All the noble provi-



tions of the common law of England, which it was the study of a certain great Civilian to the latest period of his life to counteract, have been received into the American code, as means of promoting freedom and prosperity.

FRANCE either had a perfidious monarch, or one who did not rely on the people he pretended to trust :—Monarchy was therefore abandoned in that country.

If the power of the crown or of the Lords has encreased and should be diminished—RESTORE THE BALANCE. But let nothing ever tempt the good people of these realms even to imagine the destruction of a fabric which with all its errors has, time immemorial, been the veneration of the politician and philosopher—the boast of the countries that enjoyed it, and the envy of those that did not.

It is the fashion of the hour, and as ridiculous as most fashions are, to depreciate the Revolution of 1688—and to despise the securities for our liberty, which that great transaction afforded. That Revolution expelled a Prince from the throne for attempting to govern without law. It preserved a spirit of freedom in these countries, which burst out again in America near ninety years afterwards; and travelling back, communicated its flame to Gallic slaves, converted in these latter days into free men, and become the hope of the world.

It is the fashion of the hour, to defend the wild position, that THE ENGLISH HAVE NO CONSTITUTION; and to apply indiscriminately to Kings, such indecent epithets as we should blush to use against the lowest of our species.—If constitutions can only have existence on *parchment*, much of what is called the British is indeed but a name—for its foundation is the *unwritten* law of the land. If there never was a British one, for what purpose assembled the Barons at Runnymede?—Why was Richard solemnly deposed by the suffrages of both houses, and the crown conferred on the Duke of Hereford? For what did *Hampden*, *Sydney*, and *Russel*, sacrifice their lives?—When *Charles* was brought to the scaffold, and the crown of *James* was torn from his brow, were not the actors in these scenes vindicating a constitution against the encroach-

ments of princes, who had found that we possessed one, and wished to deprive us of it?—Is the united wisdom of ages, in which men of the first political eminence flourished, to be despised and rejected?—If ingenious arguments, raised latterly against the very ground-work of the British Constitution, and drawn merely from *its abuses*, be solid and convincing, every writer on the general principles of government, is a shallow reasoner and a blockhead. Are such terms applicable to *Locke, Molyneux, Montesquieu, Rousseau, Voltaire, De Lillome*, and the endless train of authors whose works claim immortality?—Have the ardent friends of freedom, in our own time, among whom we number *Flood, Grattan, Price, Jebb*, and *Wyvill*, lost all pretention to common sense; and must we fix the charge of idiotism on every provincial and national convention in Ireland, as well as on the numerous English and Scotch societies, instituted for the express purpose of reforming errors in a constitution that has no existence but in the eye of fancy?

THE first French assembly drew a plan of Government on parchment, and raised their structure on a sublime *declaration of rights*; but it was hardly formed till their successors, after vain struggles with its errors, were obliged to raze it from its very base. Such are the virtues of a parchment constitution!—The present spirited, and, I believe, virtuous convention, is now creating a substitute for it, and that a *Republic*. (\*) Tho' they have every wish of the writer of this

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NOTE.

(\*) THE new constitution alluded to above, has also since been laid aside, and a third produced. This third one abandons a fundamental point in the former, that was cried up as a new discovery in Republics, to wit, electoral assemblies appointed by the collective body of the people, and placed between them and the national legislature, for the election of the latter. The very matter which they have deserted was praised both in that country and this, as an infallible corrective of all the inconveniences of democracy. These instances are sufficient proofs of the inferiority of theory to practice.

essay, that the Revolution may end in a substantial practical government, many years will the present generation have slumbered in the dust, ere its claim to a permanent existence can be established. There is no other form more liable to abuse, nor more subject to rapid change, than the one which perhaps necessity has obliged them to adopt, and which reason should certainly teach us to shun.

THE advocates for human rights, as all should be, will be convinced that the highest effort of genius and intellect may fall short in such an attempt, when he recollects the failure of *Locke* himself in forming a constitution for a British colony, with the purest principles of his own immortal work as his guide.—To such errors will the noblest minds and the most enlightened assemblies be subject, when *theory alone* directs their path.

THERE is an absurd veneration of ancient establishments, which borders on folly and superstition—there is also a hardy contempt of the experience of ages, an inordinate love of innovation, and a desire of *destroying* where we might *repair*, that amount to presumption, and lead to ruin. Whether two living characters, whose books furnish the conversation of the present day, have sat for these portraits—the reader must determine.

THOUGHTS  
ON THE BRITISH CONSTITUTION.

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No. II.

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“ Dans les monarchies la politique fait faire les grandes choses,  
“ avec le moins de vertu qu'elle peut.

ESPRIT DES LOIX, III. 5.

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“ To produce great political good, less virtue is required in  
“ a monarchy, than in any other form of government.”

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DECEMBER 14.

WHEN a people think of framing a NEW CONSTITUTION, they should not choose the purest in theory, but the best that they can execute. If they fix upon one that requires greater integrity, economy, sobriety, and public spirit, than they possess, they will not be able to carry it into execution; and as the best things, when corrupted, become the worst, their visionary scheme will end in something worse than that which they had it in their power to secure.

IF A DEMOCRACY, (which is a form of government conducted by popular assemblies, or in which promiscuous assemblies of the people have great influence over the legislature and the executive power) be chosen, the execution of the plan will depend on the multitude, or those who direct the multitude. While they continue perfectly wise, temperate, and upright, they will neither propose nor ratify any laws, except those which conduce to the public good. But should they at any time be addicted to folly, idleness, or corruption, all is lost. As the whole management and liberty of the country will then depend upon an ignorant, licentious, idle and profligate populace, whoever shall gain an influence over them may become master of the state. A democracy will then terminate in a DICTATORSHIP, or EMPIRE, as in Rome; or in the dominion of a foreign power, as in Athens.

EVERY people, which is not altogether ignorant of human nature and of itself, will suppose this to be a possible case. Those, who have any knowledge of History, will take it for granted, that it will be the lot of every nation, at some time or other : and they will see cause to suspect that corruption will gain ground most rapidly where men are in the exercise of power and consequently most liable to temptation, that is, in a democratical REPUBLIC.

As this will happen some time or other, a wise man in deliberating on a new Constitution, will look for one, that will either answer a people, already corrupted ; or that will execute itself, after they shall become corrupted. Otherwise they will be governed, only, while they require little or no government, which is the case of the Americans at present. A Constitution, formed on this plan, must consist of several branches, and must provide several checks.

SUCH IS THE BRITISH CONSTITUTION. The KING, with a responsible council, presides in the executive department, and has a negative upon all laws proposed by the Lords or Commons ; but cannot himself propose any. He has a great interest in the honour and prosperity of the state ; but as he is liable to temptation, invested with great power, and may not always be sensible that his real dignity and happiness consist in the freedom of his subjects, he is by the practice of the Constitution forbid to act without his council ; who are subject to be tried and punished either by impeachment or attainder. Lest this should not be a sufficient restraint, the Peers have individually a right of counselling the King : and the supplies depend upon the Commons.

Thus it agrees with the description of the Roman Constitution, under the Kings, as given by Sallust. *Imperium legitimum, nomen imperii regium habebant.*—*Transl.* A government of law, tho' styled a monarchy.

THE Lords act in two capacities, as the Supreme Court of Judicature, and as a Legislative Assembly. As a criminal court, they take cognizance of crimes against the state : as a court of civil appeal, they decide, in the last resort on cases



of property : and as a branch of the legislature, they have a negative upon all laws ; and a right of originating and amending all bills, except those which impose taxes. They are the heads of great and numerous families, and the proprietors of extensive landed estates ; they are men destined from their birth to the exercise of these high functions ; and it is reasonably expected that they should be educated so as to discharge them with ability. Some of them are men, who have risen from an inferior situation, by their abilities in public business, and their knowledge of the law. From all these considerations, there arises a probability that though they may often be misled by vanity, ambition, and partiality to the fountain of their honours, they will never concur in rendering the King *absolute* ; nor in promoting any measure that may diminish the influence and dignity of their house, or strike at the prosperity of the kingdom, in which they and their numerous relatives and connections are so nearly concerned : because such innovations would at the same time destroy their own consequence.

THE same hopes may be formed of THE COMMONS, who are elected for a limited term of years. The number of electors has varied at different periods, and is certainly at present too small.

MANY of the members of the House of Commons, are, like the Lords, persons of large property, bound by personal interest to preserve the freedom and forward the improvement of the country ; deeply interested in the good opinion of their fellow-citizens, and subject to rejection at the expiration of their trust. They have entire direction of the public treasure, are the Grand Jury of the nation in all state trials, and are competent by their power over the public purse to control the upper House and the King. It is however greatly to be lamented that they are frequently corrupted by influence and bribery : and it is yet more to be regretted that their constituents are too often liable to the same charge.

THESE constituents, with their fellow-citizens, form an additional check, a sort of FOURTH ESTATE ; for the opinion of

the people of England has been found capable more than once, of controuling every branch of the government, in its turn.

THESE are the principal wheels in this complicated machine. The theory, the practice, and the very principle of counteraction on which it is constructed, have all been made the subjects of ridicule; and I have sometimes joined in the laugh; for I know that the wisest plans are often liable to the most ludicrous misrepresentations. But I have at a more serious moment derived solid satisfaction from reflecting, that it has been the instrument of establishing and securing, for a longer time than any other constitution, a greater degree of national liberty, prosperity, civilization, and knowledge, than was ever enjoyed by any other people, under any other form of government whatsoever.

THE particular instances of the truth of this observation cannot be all enumerated in these limits. I shall therefore conclude for the present as I began, by mentioning one consequence of this order of things, which must appear of infinite importance to every one who has a due sense of the strong tendency to corruption, so visible in every community and every individual, especially when invested with power.

THE point I allude to is this—No other form of government has ever been able to preserve the liberty and prosperity of the people in so depraved a state of society. Republican constitutions have answered well, while the people were able to govern themselves; but as fast as they began to require government, with the same haste did the constitution become incapable of affording it. The reason is plain; the people themselves were the administration, or the immediate directors of the administration; and they became frivolous, luxurious, extravagant and idle. If they had the framing of laws, they enacted, that the revenue appropriated to the maintenance of the navy should be applied to the support of the theatre, and made it a capital crime to *move* for the repeal of this law!—This was done by the Athenians, the most en-

lightened and patriotic people of antiquity. If they have only the election of representatives in their power, they sell their votes to the highest bidder, and spend their bribes in deploring the degeneracy of the times, and planning a Revolution that will give them the whole of the plunder, which they are now obliged to share with their deputies. This last is the state of England and Ireland at present. It is plain that in a democracy this must speedily produce anarchy, and terminate in the arbitrary power of an individual.—But what is the state of affairs under the British Constitution?—The people have continued in this state of depravity for a great number of years, exposing their votes, and every thing that depends on their votes, namely, their liberty, civil and religious; their property, real and personal; to open sale in every county-town, city and borough in the kingdom, and only lamenting that the septennial and octennial fairs do not more frequently return. Now, notwithstanding this profligacy, the people of England enjoy, at this day, a greater degree of rational freedom, internal prosperity, and foreign power, united, than perhaps any other state of ancient or modern times. Il ne faut pas beaucoup de probité pour qu'un Gouvernement Monarchique, ou un Gouvernement Despotique se maintiennent, ou se soutiennent. La force des loix dans l'un, le bras du Prince, toujours levé dans l'autre, reglent ou contiennent tout. Mais dans un état Populaire il faut un ressort de plus, qui est la vertu. *ESPRIT DES LOIX*, III. 3. *Transl.* A MONARCHIAL or Despotic Government can support itself without much integrity in the people. The power of law in the one, the arm of the Prince in the other, regulate every thing. But in a popular state there must be something else to resort to, and that is, virtue.

THIS proceeds from the system of checks and counteraction which I have described. The King may desire to extend his prerogative: but the two Houses are jealous of their privileges and are backed by the people. The Lords may be partial to the Crown, and willing to encroach on the Commons: but self-interest will prevent them from sacrificing their consequence in the state; and they find the Commons not less

tenacious of their rights than able to maintain them.—The Commons are an over match for both the Monarchical and the Aristocratical branches, and have nothing to fear from their union: but should they abuse their power, in opposition to the sense of the nation, we have seen that their constituents will defeat the ambitious projects of their own representatives: and on all such occasions, the King can appeal to the people, by a dissolution Parliament.

Thus it has happened, that every branch of the Government may be corrupt, and meditate unconstitutional encroachments on the rest; nay the people themselves may be sunk in gross corruption, and yet the country be free and prosperous.—This cannot be said of any Government except the *British*.

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THOUGHTS  
ON THE BRITISH CONSTITUTION.

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No. III.

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“ THE Executive Power ought to be in the hands of a  
“ MONARCH; because this branch of government is  
“ better administered by ONE than by MANY.—If there  
“ was no Monarch, and the Executive Power was com-  
“ mitted to a certain number of persons, selected from  
“ the Legislative Body—THERE WOULD BE AN END  
“ THEN OF LIBERTY.”

MONTESQUIEU.

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DECEMBER 18.

THE page of history is stained with the crimes of Kings. They are charged not only with their own, but those which have been perpetrated in their names. Almost all Kings have been absolute monarchs; and their passions being thus released from controul, have run into the wildest excess.—

But there is no doubt that they have often been made accountable for enormities in which they had no share. They have been loaded with obloquy on account of the effects of state policy, of the ambition of their subjects, of court intrigue, and personal resentment, of which they have been only the dupes. Every thing that happens during the reign of a King is imputed to himself ; though he may have been as innocent as Edward VI. when he signed the writ (*de hæretico comburendo*) for burning the anabaptist woman.

MONARCHY is falling into disrepute, because we have seldom had examples of Monarchs properly limited. Kings acquired their power, either by conquest, or feudal pre-eminence. The power conferred by conquest is unbounded ; and the feudal chief considered his people as vassals. The royal houses of Europe are chiefly indebted for their crowns to the feudal system and the usages of the northern barbarians. According to the strength or weakness of the Barons, were the restrictions of the royal authority. For many generations the Barons, or Lords, were the only opposers of despotism ; and England, in particular, is indebted to them for MAGNA CHARTA, and for confining the King within some moderate limits, until THE COMMONS became of sufficient consequence to join in the opposition.

THE influence of the Commons arose from the introduction of commerce, and from the privilege obtained by the Lords under Henry VII. of alienating their lands, which the merchants were then able to purchase. This strengthened the opposition, and confirmed the limitation of the prerogative. In *France*, the downfall of the Barons was the exaltation of the Throne ; in England, it contributed to its limitation, by strengthening the Commons.

WHETHER the King of England is even now sufficiently restricted, is a question which may come under consideration at another time :—at present I mean only to offer some remarks in favour of LIMITED MONARCHY ; and what I have premised may justify me in saying, that no conclusion can be drawn against this branch of our Constitution, from the personal vices of arbitrary tyrants, nor from the miseries occa-



tioned by despotism. There is a greater distance between the absolute power of a despot, and the regulated authority of a King, who is considered as the president or chief magistrate of the state, than between the fury of a mob, and the wisdom of a well constituted Republic.

With respect to foreign affairs, it is, I believe, admitted by every respectable writer on politics, that a monarchy excels in three very important particulars—secrecy—vigour—and dispatch; and with regard to internal tranquility, it is attended with this invaluable advantage, that it extinguishes the hopes of turbulent ambition.

ALL the Republics of antiquity, except LACEDEMON, were torn by incessant convulsions, through the intrigues, real or imaginary, of powerful citizens, aiming at the supreme authority. These occasioned more misery, than all the fictitious plots invented in other countries, by Kings or their ministers. Lacedemon escaped those plagues by combining a limited monarchy with a democratical government. The throne was considered as the indisputable hereditary property of two branches of the family of *Hercules*. The division of the royal authority between two co-existing Kings would seem to be an abundant source of discord and contention, yet the effect was, that the peace of the State was never disturbed by any pretenders to the throne.

ATHENS was so distracted by attempts to seize upon the supreme power, or by the fear of despotism, that she was obliged to resort to the extraordinary expedient of banishing, by ostracism, every citizen who excelled the rest in abilities, or even in the most harmless virtues. The Athenian who voted for the exile of *Aristides*, could give no other reason for his conduct than this—that he was grieved to hear him called *Aristides the just*. This is a striking instance of a general truth, that envy is the despot of Republics.

ROME was continually engaged in such struggles. Valerius, justly surnamed Poplicola, or the courtier of the populace, had scarcely expelled the *Tarquins*, when he was accused of

a design to restore royalty in his own person. Manlius fell under the same suspicion, and was thrown from the Tarpeian Rock, soon after he had, with his single arm, defended it against the Gauls. The Decemvirs attempted to perpetuate their authority. The Consuls and Senate were, almost every year, obliged to resign the lives and liberties of the people into the hands of a *Dictator*. The contests of *Marius* and *Sylla*, *Cæsar* and *Pompey*, *Octavius* and *Anthony*—conducted the Republic through a series of calamities to her final extinction.

Thus in Republics, the abilities of the greatest men are either extinguished by banishment, and transferred to the enemies of the state; or they become the pests of their country, by indulging an inordinate ambition. In the first instance, the country becomes subject to a foreign power, like *Philip of Macedon*—in the other, to a domestic tyrant, who having obtained a victory over the rights of his fellows, will never think himself safe, while a free, or a daring, or a virtuous man exists among his subjects.—*Regibus boni, quam mali suspectiores sunt: semperque his aliena virtus formidolosa.*—SALLUST BELL. CAT. *Transl.* The good are always more suspected by despots than the bad: merit is ever formidable to them.

SUCH was the line of the Roman Emperors. A LIMITED MONARCHY avoids these extremes. The monarch has no rivals to fear, and of course has no incentive to cruelty.—The principal citizens have no hope of attaining the supreme authority, and must confine themselves to more innocent objects of ambition.

THE greatest nobleman in England has no more chance of ascending the throne, than the meanest peasant.—In Republics, the ablest citizens waste and abuse their abilities in ambitious and ruinous projects: in absolute Monarchies, they conceal them altogether, or sacrifice them to the will of the Prince. But in a limited Monarchy, none can raise his hopes to the crown: none can rise to any true greatness, except by serving the state, and by the good opinion of his fellow subjects.

L'AMBITION est pernicieuse dans un Republique. Elle a de bons effets dans la Monarchie —ESPR. DES LOIX. III. 7. *Transf.*  
 IN a Republic, ambition is pernicious; in a Monarchy beneficial.

THE same arguments as well as the authority of history, recommend hereditary, in preference to elective Monarchy. An elective Monarchy threatens intestine wars; desperate conspiracies; cruel precautions; and bloody revenge. Upon this point I presume the public are nearly of one mind: since we all joined so heartily in applauding and supporting the abortive revolution of POLAND, in which the change from an elective to an hereditary Monarchy was a striking feature.

How far the evils attendant on the old Republics may be obviated by the *Representative* form, may be considered hereafter.

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### THOUGHTS

#### ON THE BRITISH CONSTITUTION.

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#### No. IV.

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DECEMBER 25—

“POINT de Monarque, point de Noblesse; point de  
 “ Noblesse, point de Monarque, mais on a un despote.”

ESPRIT DE LOIX, II. 4.

“No King, no Nobility; no Nobility, no King, but in  
 “ his stead a despot.”

SENSE OF LAWS, II. 4.

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THE histories of all governments give testimony to the superiority of the principles of our own. To these it may probably be restored, if the people have the spirit, virtue, and wisdom, to draw their force to a point—to a reform of  
 ACKNOWLEDGED ABUSES IN THE REPRESENTATION.

THIS language will not be understood by any who wish to distract public attention, and draw it off to the Utopian schemes of a distempered imagination. With such men, whatever is good in our present frame of government, is to be involved in one common wreck, with what is bad. Every speck on its surface, becomes a mountain; and whatever is venerable and noble, diminishes to a point.

ITS ABUSES are great, but its good qualities are many. To remove the one, and preserve the other, is the first aim of a patriot.

My last contained general remarks on the advantages peculiar to limited Monarchy; contrasted with the incessant convulsions incident to a *Republic*.

THE HEREDITARY BRANCH of our legislature, now naturally rises into view.

IN the endless Philipics, against the constitution, the House of Lords has been one of the principal butts of satire. —Many of its enemies are enemies of the whole system, as they would be of any other that chance had connected them with, and they attack at this point, conceiving it the weakest in the line. They are either those who will not perceive excellence in any thing short of absolute perfection; or who prefer a political storm to the blessing of liberty under a serene sky.

THAT several nobles have rendered themselves odious to the best friends of order in our country, we need not be surprised. A removal however of the cause of aversion, must in the sober eye of reason, claim a preference to the absolute extinction of an essential part of our government.

THE nobles early laid one of the broadest foundations of our liberty in the reign of King John; and at different periods since that æra, they have preserved or restored the political balance.

MONTESQUIEU, in exploring the private springs of the rise, declension, and fall of Empires, draws this striking picture;

which is recommended as an original, to the young political connoisseur.—“ A very curious spectacle it was in the last century, to behold the impotent efforts the English made for the establishment of democracy. The government was continually changing. The people, amazed at so many revolutions, sought every where for a democracy—without being able to find it. At length after a series of *tumultuary motions and violent shocks*, they were obliged to have recourse to THE VERY GOVERNMENT which they had so odiously proscribed.”

To return to the Lords : it is too true that many of them, in contempt of the constitution, in defiance of the spirit of the law and the votes of the Commons, have usurped an undue and almost ruinous dominion in the state, by monopolizing rotten insignificant *BOROUGHs*, and often returning representatives of themselves to the house of the people. To that cause, they owe all the odium in which several of them are held ; and if they should ever cease to exist as a distinct order, to that source may they trace it. But it is in their individual capacity that we are to blame them ; for in their legislative one, Lord Chatham I think has told us, that their power comparatively with that of the Commons, is as a drop of water to the ocean.

STRIP them of their unconstitutional influence over elections, and every solid objection vanishes. Were we to contemplate a House of Lords, divested of all influence in the return of the representative assembly, we should only see in it advantage and safety to the commonwealth.

THE necessity for two deliberative powers, was thus asserted by *De Lolme*, who says—“ that the laws of a state may be *permanent*, it is necessary that the LEGISLATIVE POWER should be *divided* : That they may have *weight* and continue in force, it is necessary that THE EXECUTIVE POWER should be *one*.”

IT was well understood both by the GREEKS and ROMANS ; for a senate made part of their most democratical constitutions, as the surest means of preventing precipitation and error.



The senators, in some states, held their seats for life ; and in many Roman families, the office even seems to have been hereditary.

IN a monarchical government, it is indispenfibly necessary ; and on that point it has been well said, that there cannot be a greater solecism in politics than a nobility who suffer the liberty of the Commons to be taken away. In aristocracies the nobility get whatever the commons lose ; but in monarchies, the crown alone is gainer ; and the certain consequence of their helping to enslave the Commons, is their being enslaved themselves at last.

If we take the range of history under our eye, we shall see in the Lords a permanent body that survives when the representative branch perishes ; and has more than once prevented the ruin of the constitution, when the monarch would have levelled its barriers.

DID a prince wish no longer to summon new parliaments, after the demise of an old one, we should experience in the Lords a body as imperishable as royalty itself ; entitled by privilege to demand an audience with the despot ; ready to advise a revival of the ancient forms ; and urged by its own interest to oppose him by force if he refused it.

WHEN the Commons House dissolves, the noble branch stands entire—and armed with the strength of the nation, has ere now vindicated its cause with their own. We naturally lose sight of its use, because it is most apparent, when the machine of state is most in peril ; while by the natural operation of our government it loses its force, when all is tranquil and secure.

NEITHER the limited nature of this publication, nor the time of the writer, admit of more than rapid sketches ; else might innumerable cases be stated in which the Lords would naturally stand in the breach, and where they actually have done so. I shall briefly mention four, at very different periods—1.—We are indebted to them for the Great Charter of our Liberty, acquired so early as 1215—2.—At a time when

the Roman, or civil law, now the ecclesiastical law in these kingdoms, was an object of admiration over Europe, the Lords opposed its introduction into England, tho' it was recommended there with the utmost zeal, by the clergy. Had it not been for the determined part then taken by the Peers in favour of the common law, we should not at this day have it to boast of, but be governed by the Justinian Pandects, in its stead. In the reign of Richard II. the nobility in Parliament declared their disapprobation, in these pointed terms—"The realm of England hath never been unto this hour, neither, by the consent of our Lord the King, and the Lords of Parliament, shall it ever be, ruled or governed by the civil law."—Of course to their interference on that occasion we owe the broadest foundation of our liberties.—3.—On the dissolution of government by the flight of *James*, they saved the state from destruction, by instantly holding the reins of empire for the people, issuing orders to the fleet, the army, and the garrisons, and corresponding with the Prince of Orange about the means of saving the nation. When the Convention-Parliament met, they cavilled not at the self appointment of the Commons, but acted boldly in conjunction with them, and a Revolution was effected that has had few parallels in history, either for the orderly manner in which it was conducted, or the ends it attained.—4. And, so lately as George the First, they passed a bill for limiting *their own* numbers; which, tho' a highly salutary restriction of regal prerogative, was lost in the lower house.

THE advantages of a *dernier* court of appeal, of a court for trying charges of high crimes and misdemeanours, and for the impeachment of ministers—have seldom, if ever, been denied. A supreme judicial authority is therefore vested in the Peers, as men guarded against the influence of bribery and corruption, by numbers, permanent wealth, and hereditary name.

THE necessity for a middle branch being proved by history and argument, it follows that it must have a *negative* vote; in order at once to afford a third or casting voice, to preserve a balance, and secure its own existence.

RESPECTING the spiritual Lords, little need be said. In their capacity as clergymen, they have no right to sit in Parliament ; for it is merely as persons possessing baronies under the Crown, or by fiction supposed to do so, that either the Bishops of this day, or the Abbots of a former one, could rest any claim to seats among the Lords. Their having them, serves neither religious nor civil liberty, and yet less the progress of a further reformation in the Church. Tho' some improvement might be made in this point, I conceive that as Spiritual Barons, they would not weigh a grain in the scale against A HOUSE OF COMMONS, really returned by *the People*.

IN favour of a divided legislative power, or middle estate, the annals of past ages from the earliest period to the highest cultivation of the human mind, bear evidence ; and only yesterday it has been the free choice of *America*, which in the heat of war adopted it into its constitution. After a deliberate consideration in times of peace, they retain it both in their provincial and federative legislatures. The writer would not be surprised to find that even *France*, profiting by experience, should adopt it hereafter.

WITH the words of an author, whose book should survive the language it was written in, I will close this paper.

“ A BODY of nobility is also more peculiarly necessary in our mixed and compounded constitution, in order to support the right of both the crown and the people, by forming a barrier to withstand the encroachments of both. It creates and preserves that gradual scale of dignity, which proceeds from the peasant to the Prince ; rising like a pyramid, from a broad foundation, and diminishing to a point as it rises. It is this ascending and contracting proportion that adds stability to any government ; for when the departure is sudden from one extreme to another, we may pronounce that state to be precarious.—The nobility therefore are the pillars, which are reared from among the people, more immediately to support the throne ; and if that falls, THEY must also be buried under its ruins.”

## THOUGHTS

## ON THE BRITISH CONSTITUTION.

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 No. V.
 

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JANUARY I—1793.

“ No temptation shall ever induce me to join any association that has for its object a change IN THE BASIS of our constitution, or an extension of any of these bases beyond the just proportion. It was not (thank God) made in a day. It is the result of gradual and progressive wisdom. It has grown up in a *series*; and never, never, has the guardian protecting genius of England been either *asleep* or *satisfied*.

CHAS. FOX—Speech on the 13th  
Dec. 1792, against the proclamation.

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THE CONSTITUTION; the whole CONSTITUTION; and nothing but THE CONSTITUTION.—These few words comprehend the political creed of the author of this paper.—With the whole constitution, he is neither a friend of liberty, order, nor peace, who will not rest content. Without it, no man should.

THE great body of the Commons of Ireland, would then have a full representation in their own house of Parliament—and the democracy be restored to its due weight in government.

THE power over the purse of the nation, over the sinews of war, commerce, and manufactures, over every thing that gives influence among men, being thus returned to its rightful owners—corruption would be trampled under foot, as the means of corrupting would be removed. The right of the people to originate laws, thro’ their representatives, and, to prevent improper ones by their *veto*, would be at the same time effectually secured.

No longer should we hear of auctions, auctioneers, and purchasers of the Peerage; of the vile traffic in boroughs; or of ministerial profligacy and extravagance. TAXES we should still have; for without them, only savages in the hunting state can exist; and if the feeling, rather than reflecting MILLION, ever think otherwise, they are deceived. But these expences would be regulated by wisdom, and confined within those bounds which the necessities of the commonwealth prescribe.

SUCH are the effects to be expected in the common course of things, from a House of Commons, the express image of the collective body. But to entitle it to this character, I do not hesitate to assert, that the basis of election must be extended to ROMAN CATHOLICS. They are *men*, with all the energies of our nature. By the cultivation of their native powers and feelings, the stock of national virtue, spirit, and freedom, may be increased as well as improved. I must remark in this place, that their ancient prepossessions, and their recent declarations, are all in favour of *three estates*; the defence of which, is one of the objects of these briefs essays.

WE have lived to see systematic corruption not only practised in secret, but *avowed* by administration. We have known charges of the highest crimes against the Majesty of the state, against the fountain of honours, and the unfulfilled purity that should distinguish the nobles of the land, ready to be made, but refused a hearing; tho' the guardian of his country was the accuser, and millions of wronged subjects were impatient for the issue. From such a scene it is natural to turn away with disgust; and pointing at the deformed figure, to exclaim,—*Is this our glorious and happy constitution?* But let her appear in her native colours, and the attentive spectator will discern the complexion of health, the lines of beauty, and the proportions of strength. Even in her present condition, we see the remains of a gigantic and venerable form, retaining such vigour in old age as few other constitutions exhibit in youth. Encrease the circulation by a new portion of the vital principle, and our government may long remain a blessing to all who enjoy it; an example of



one of the finest theories of antiquity, realised. For such was the constitution which Polybius described as the perfection of human contrivance, 500 years before the Saxons, HENGIST and HOREA, had landed on British ground; and such was the constitution which Cicero praises in the following words—"Statuo esse optime constitutam rempublicam quæ ex tribus generibus illis regali, optimo, et populari confusa modice, nec puniendo irritet animum inmanem et ferum, nec omnia prætermittendo licentia cives deteriores reddat."—*Cic. Frag. Lib. 2. de Rep.*—I lay it down (he says) as a maxim, that that state is best constituted, which being composed of the three forms, royal, aristocratic, and popular, neither exasperates the unruly and ferocious mind of the multitude, by severity; nor corrupts the people, by licentious indulgence.

WHAT government is the most desirable, most congenial to the nature of human beings?—That which does not require an incessant and unrelaxed action of *the whole* people to keep it alive; but which, by frequent periodical calls, reminds them of the rights of man, and the constitution of their government. Not that which can only exist by continual appeals to *every* member of the community, which rests on the unremitting activity and heroic virtues of each, and tumbles into ruin when deprived of these precarious supports. Such an one is neither calculated to promote the most durable liberty, nor happiness of men.

In the first moments of popular ardour, where the sinews of every individual fight the battles of the country, the successes of a new people may dazzle others sunk in torpid repose; but they are by no means proofs of the future excellence or stability of their embryo constitution.

THE great Author of Nature never but for the highest purposes of wisdom, suspends the laws of his government. Tracing an analogy between his works and those of his creatures, we may pronounce, that structures which are most hastily erected, have the worst chance of lasting existence; whilst those which spring from occasions, and grow out of the wants of the human soul—may be considered as resting on foundations laid by a divine hand.

THOUGHTS  
ON THE BRITISH CONSTITUTION.

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No. VI.

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JAN. 12, 1793.

“ By the corruption of Parliaments, and the absolute influence of a King or his Minister on the two Houses, we return into that state, to deliver us, or secure us from which, Parliaments were instituted. Our whole constitution is at once dissolved. Many securities to liberty are provided; but the integrity which depends on the freedom and the independency of parliament, is the key-stone which keeps the whole together. If this be shaken, our constitution totters; if it be quite removed, our constitution falls into ruin. That noble fabric, the pride of Britain, the envy of her neighbours, raised by the labour of so many centuries, repaired at the expence of so many millions, and cemented by such a profusion of *blood*; that noble fabric, I say, which was able to resist the united efforts of so many races of GIANTS, may be demolished by a race of PYGMIES.”

BOLINGBROKE.

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IT is now near two thousand years since Polybius, in contemplating the various defects to which governments were subject, conceived a mixture of the elements of each, that was to avoid the errors of all. He probably did not entertain a hope, that the bold flight of his fancy would be realized in the revolution of time; that the system would prove as excellent in practice as it was in theory; and that its pre-eminence would be placed beyond the possibility of doubt, by its having among its other virtues the valuable one of *stability*.

His speculation was founded on the nature of MAN; else that would at this day remain only the monument of a fine imagination, which our rude ancestors enjoyed long after in their native woods.—They enjoyed the spirit and essence

of the British Constitution : and if we are asked in what records the charter of their liberties is to be found, we answer with HUME, that " it was not writ on parchment, nor yet on " leaves, or barks of trees ; for it preceded the use of writing and all other civilized arts of life."

It is one of the many perfections of that constitution which, with a necessary reform, these papers contend for, that it has the peculiar faculty of recovering after every fall ; instead of gradual declension, and dissolution. Even the commanding mind of CROMWELL, could only change its monarchical outline for a season ; and CHARLES and JAMES suspended the democracy in its composition, at the expence of the head of the one, and the crown of the other. The machine felt transient convulsions, but reverted back to its original state with more celerity than it had departed from it.

So deeply laid in the constitution is the spirit of liberty, that it rose superior to the power of the Plantagenets, Tudors, and Stuarts, and to every attack from every quarter.

To revive its spirit, we have only to recur to its first principles ; and, clearing away the rubbish of centuries, erect the popular pillar of government on a foundation which shall at once procure security to the crown, stability to the peerage, and liberty to the people.

" *THE fec-simile is in us.*" We can revise and amend, or rather restore ; for the structure contains within itself materials for its repair.

STRENGTHENED by the opinions and actions of the greatest men in modern times, without a single contrary authority, till within the two last years,—many contend, that the *constitution* is not merely a name, but A REALITY :—others allege, that to the latter character it has no pretensions, because it is not FIXED and WRITTEN—and because it is ALTERABLE by the King, Lords, and Commons.—But all agree, that a reform in the Commons House is an object in the highest degree desirable ; and that by *unity* and *perseverance*, it may be effected.

LET every honest heart and hand, then, be applied to bring it about. In the disunion of the people, evil governors found their hopes; in an adherence to simple points, they have their greatest fears.

It little concerns me what party is either pleased or displeased by the freedom of these thoughts, as they are dictated by a genuine affection for my native land; by an aversion to every power that would trample on the rights of my fellow men; and by a sincere sorrow for all their wanderings from the plain line of practicable good. My regard for a radical reform is sufficiently evinced; as my object is to promote an union among the people of Ireland, and to urge those under whose eye these papers may fall, to direct their hopes to ONE undisputed point. In that point ALL meet; and against the necessity of attaining it, the most corrupt courtier, pensioner, or sycophant, no longer presumes to offer an argument.

WITH those virtuous men, whose sole object is a fair organ through which the will of the people may be declared in Parliament, I trust, that the one grand object may be pursued with steady decision; and that spirit and moderation may be so happily co-mingled, that on the heads of Governors shall fall any evil that can follow. Every thing bordering on precipitation or intemperance, would be ruin and defeat. If the nation, as an aggregate whole, come fairly and decidedly forward—success will follow. But even the thoughtless agitator should beware how matters are pushed to extremes, ere the counties and the provinces are ready to speak and to act. Such men are apt to look from the spot they inhabit, as the soul of a system; to imagine that its rays illumine the farthest verge of the circle; and that the same ardent heat prevails at the extremities which is felt at the center.

To *those invested with power*, I beg leave to address a few words. They should hear them with the greater candour, as they come from one who detests levelling and republican principles, as much as he condemns the blemishes that deface our Constitution. To restore the weight properly belonging

to each of the three powers, is the utmost extent of his wish ; and that wish has not only reason, but millions to support it.

FROM an attentive observation of the growth of public opinion, of what has passed and is passing in the minds of men, I aver that the feint approbation of the measure, which formerly convoked county meetings, and provincial ones, a volunteer convention, and a civil assembly of delegates, has at length given way to a desire of reform, which animates every breast, and whispers that the rights of the people, pursued even in the ways of peace, cannot long be withheld. That it is not now as it once was, confined to a virtuous few, who with unceasing labour fanned the spark—but actuates every honest man, of every rank. It is not restricted to the needy, to whom scenes of confusion afford profit and delight ; but embraces all, or almost all, the gentlemen of landed property in *Ulster*, not within the baleful influence of a Court. They join in the general prayer for a reform, as public tranquillity and the WILL OF THE NATION require it. They are those who have most to contend for, and to whom peace and the security of property must ever be dear ; but their judgment concurs with that of every thinking man, that a gracious and well timed concession may ensure the loyalty and happiness of Ireland for generations. A wise statesman would even in times of profound peace investigate this great canker in the state ; nor in war should he shrink from it.

THIS is the interest of the King, and the King's friends ; of the People, and the People's friends—may it be considered with the seriousness which the subject deserves !

PROCRASTINATION is dangerous ; decision, wisdom. There are times when moderate improvement would be accepted with pleasure and content, that at a more advanced stage would be rejected with scorn. Let no man pretend that principles unfriendly to the spirit of the Constitution, are widely disseminated—if there are such, they lurk in a few breasts, and are too feeble to infect the general mass. Every society of Citizens, every Volunteer body, every Catholic meeting, disclaims them—and rests their hopes singly on AMENDMENT, NOT SUBVERSION.



If government require a lesson, they may receive it from a Statesman, qualified to steer thro' a tempestuous ocean. With his advice, therefore, given in Parliament on the 13th ult. shall this number conclude.

CHARLES FOX'S ADVICE TO MINISTERS.

*What, it may be asked, would I propose to do in hours of agitation like the present? I will answer openly. If there is a tendency in the Dissenters to discontent, because they conceive themselves unjustly suspected and cruelly calumniated, what should I do? I would instantly repeal the Test and Corporation Acts, and take from them thereby all cause of complaint. If there were any persons tinctured with a republican spirit, because they thought that the representative government was more perfect in a republic, I would endeavour to amend the representation of the Commons, and to prove that the House of Commons, though not chosen by ALL, should have no other interest than to prove itself the representative of all. If there were men dissatisfied in Scotland or Ireland, or elsewhere, on account of disabilities and exemptions, of unjust prejudices, and of cruel restrictions; I would repeal the penal statutes, which are a disgrace to our law book. If there were other complaints of grievance, I would redress them where they were really proved; but above all, I would constantly, cheerfully, patiently, LISTEN. I would make it known that if any man felt, or thought he felt a grievance, he might come freely to the bar of this House, and bring his proofs. And it should be made manifest to all the world, that where they did exist, they should be redressed; where they did not, that it should be made manifest. If I were to issue a proclamation, this should be my proclamation: "If any man has a grievance, let him bring it to the bar of the Commons House of Parliament, with the firm persuasion of having it honestly investigated." These are the subsidies that I would grant to Government. What, instead of this, is done? Suppress the complaint—check the circulation of knowledge—command that no man shall read; or that as no man under 100l. a year can kill a partridge, that no man under 20 or 30l. a year shall dare to read or to think.*

THOUGHTS

ON THE BRITISH CONSTITUTION.

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No. VII.

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\* THE English Colonies in North America are entitled to  
“ certain rights, by the immutable laws of nature, the  
“ principles of the British Constitution, and the several  
“ CHARTERS OR COMPACTS.”

[*Declaration of American Congress in 1774.*]

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FEBRUARY 12.

THE word CONSTITUTION, has a variety of significations. In a general sense it means the act or manner in which any thing is constituted, or the parts of which it is composed. When applied to *politics*, it sometimes expresses the component or constituting members of a government; as when we say, that King, Lords, and Commons, are the constitution of Great Britain. At other times, it means certain principles, laid as a foundation, on which a future government may be built: but as it has seldom happened, that people had an opportunity of proceeding so methodically, this, 'till of late, was a very unusual sense of the word.—The signification, which it has obtained in England and Ireland, is a COLLECTION OF FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS, which were early asserted and established by the people; to which by long habit and experience they have become firmly attached, and which they conceive to be essential to the continuance of their liberties.

If England has *no* constitution, there never was one in the world till within these seventeen years; and all the nations of antiquity as well as of modern times, were slaves. Whoever has been gulled by such a deceitful position, may blush for a shameful surrender of his understanding.

LET us for an instant, look to AMERICA; the only country in which it seems there *is* a constitution. What is her con-

stitution, deservedly boasted, and well calculated as it is, for the manners of the inhabitants? It is a declaration in writing of most of the primary principles of that very British one, the existence of which is questioned! These principles HAVE existed and DO exist in force, after the revolution of many ages. America has not only found, but traced them, in legible characters. She has given them "a visible form" and wisely adopted them into her system; as far as it was practicable, from the difference between the authority of a President, and that of a King.

HE who searches with candour, will be at no loss to find the British Constitution in CHARTERS; in statute and common law; in immemorial MAXIMS AND PRACTICES; and in that unrivalled system of PRINCIPLES, from which these have issued. John Adams, the Vice President of the United States, has within these two years informed us, that it lies in a venerable body of unwritten or customary laws, sanctioned by the accumulated experience of ages, and by statutes.

WE will briefly try how far this is founded.—The Constitution, at so early a period as the Saxons in England, establishes our right to a government by laws, framed by those who are to be governed; and to the trial by Jury. It establishes our right to very general suffrage; for from the reign of *Alfred* in 871, to the 7th of Henry IV [Note 1.] and

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NOTES REFERRED TO ABOVE.

(1.) 7th Hen. IV. enacts, that "All those that there be present, as well sureties duly summoned for this cause, as others, shall attend to the election of *their* Knights for the Parliament; and then, in full county, shall proceed to election freely and *indifferently*, notwithstanding any request or commandment to the contrary."

I AM far from adducing this instance of an early *statute*, respecting universal suffrage in counties, as an argument for its adoption in the present altered circumstances of society. It is one of those points, on which the best friends of reform

from thence to 8th Henry VI. in 1429, [Note 2.] every free male inhabitant was, or might be, an elector. During Henry's

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may hold dissimilar opinions; and on which nothing should tempt us to split. Certainly, general liberty may be well maintained, without the communication of franchise to paupers, vagabonds, and the lowest order of the state. It can never be denied that the strict line of theoretical right goes the full length, but we are obliged to desert that, when we exclude every male that happens to be a single hour short of twenty-one years of age; as well as those who cease to be miners, between the termination of one election and the commencement of another. If we must thus, in order to produce the greatest good, exclude a monstrous proportion of all the male inhabitants of a country, on the score of mental incapacity during non-age; on the same principle, persons dependant on others, through poverty or servitude, are as ill qualified to perform the duty of free agents as the youth of eighteen, nineteen, or twenty. And we need not be informed that these periods are the most favourable to virtuous enthusiasm, as well as least liable to selfish passions. Beside these arguments, it may be alleged that COMMERCE, that great spring of political independence, as well as the fixed interest in LAND, should be protected by parliamentary representation. I shall add another consideration, which has engaged the attention of writers on this subject. Our government being a mixed one, its democracy might by such an unlimited accession of power, become more than paramount to the other branches, and eventually accomplish their ruin; at the same time that it might, as it appears it did in old times, be attended with tumult and confusion at the hustings. It is sufficient for my argument, to have thus revived a constitutional fact, tending to demonstrate that without disturbing ancient foundations, the base of election may be as widely extended as the best interests of liberty can possibly require.

(2.) THE preamble of the act, 8th Henry VI. limiting elective franchise to 40s. freeholders, runs thus :

minority (when he was crowned King of France at Paris) a law was enacted confining elective franchise to persons possessed of a freehold worth 40s. per annum.

It establishes our right to very frequent elections of Parliament : for they were held twice in every year down to 1400. The good old custom of frequent Parliaments, was declared by statute 4. Ed. III. which expressly says, that they "shall be holden once every year and more often if need be." And by Statute 36 of same reign ; which declares that they "shall be holden every year."

HERE then,—our right, even by the written law of the land, and by still more ancient usage, to a very extended elective franchise, and to very frequent Parliaments, is fully proved. They are as noble foundations of a representative government, as any which modern times can boast of.

MAGNA CHARTA. In 1215, we find some of its parts in the great Charter of King John ; which was only a ratifica-

"WHEREAS the elections of knights of shires, to come to the Parliament of our Lord the King, in many counties of the realm of England, have now of late been made by very great outrages, and excessive numbers of people, dwelling within the same counties of the realm of England, of the which most part was of people of small substance, and of no value, whereof every of them pretended a voice equivalent, as to such electors to be made, with the most worthy Knights and Esquires dwelling within the same counties ; whereby manslaughter, riots, batteries, and divisions, among the gentlemen and other people of the same counties, shall very likely rise and be, unless convenient and due remedy be provided in this behalf. Our Lord the King, &c. &c."

A SECOND act passed, 10th Henry VI. requiring that the freehold (to use its own words) should "lie within the same county where any such choosers will meddle of any such elections."



tion of principles in actual operation several centuries before that æra. This charter, in order to prevent arbitrary imprisonment, establishes the principle, that the meanest subject can only be brought to trial, when lawful evidence is given against him. [MAG. CH. *Article 47*]. That his trial must be by jury [*Art. 48.*] It abolishes "excessive fines," and also pledges the Crown not to "sell, deny, or defer right and justice" to any man. It also requires that the Prelates, Earls and great Barons, shall be summoned to *the great Council* (afterwards called the Parliament) each by a particular writ : and the lesser Barons, by a general summons of the Sheriff. This charter was deemed so valuable a portion of the constitution, that our ancestors took care to have it confirmed thirty times ; that important part of it which secures personal liberty has been corroborated by six different statutes ; and all its essential articles were granted to Ireland, in like manner, by Henry III.

EVEN in the few articles which I have now selected, we trace valuable traits of a constitution.

WE find it also in the PETITION OF RIGHTS, in the reign of Charles I. which renewed and extended THE GREAT CHARTER. Among other matters, it prevents the Crown from obliging the people to grant loans independently of Parliament ; it prevents imprisonment without previous cause shewn ; it prevents condemnation to death by Crown Commissioners, without trial by the laws and statutes of the realm. So far as this law went, it restored certain parts of the constitution which had been infringed by the monarch.

WE find it in the HABEAS CORPUS ACT of Charles II. which obliges a jailor to produce in court the body of his prisoner, and shew cause for his detainer.—By it no man can be re-committed for the same offence ; which last (Hume says) was a provision for liberty, that had not place in any other government ; and those which since that æra have enjoyed it, borrowed it from that constitution which we are now exploring in some of its principal parts.

WE find it in the BILL OF RIGHTS, which informs us among other matters THAT neither laws, nor the execution of them,

can be suspended by regal authority.—The Star-Chamber, is by it illegal—levying money for, or to the use of the Crown, without grant of Parliament, is illegal—right of the subject to petition the King, declared law; and all commitments or prosecutions for exercising that right, contrary to it. *A standing army in peace, without consent of Parliament, illegal.* Right of Protestant subjects to carry arms, asserted. Election of Members of Parliament ought to be free. Freedom of speech and debate in Parliament, not impeachable; nor to be questioned in any court or place out of the same. Excessive bail not to be required; nor excessive fines imposed; nor cruel, nor unusual punishments inflicted. Jurors to be duly impannelled (not packed); and Juries on charges of high treason, to consist of freeholders. And for “redress of all grievances, Parliaments to be held frequently.”

THE great Whig Commoner, WM. PITT, (not indeed the present gentleman of that name,) mentions one of the principles of our constitution, in the following admirable manner.—“It is a maxim of our law, that every Englishman’s house is his castle. Not that it is surrounded with walls and battlements: it may be a straw-built shed. Every wind of Heaven, may whistle round it;—all the elements of nature, may enter in:—but the King cannot; the King dare not.”—Respecting MAGNA CHARTA, it is a rule that infringements of that charter should not have the force of law. Among other principles, are these; that jurors should be of the vicinage and not composed of men living at a distance. That the duties of the King, to his people, and the allegiance of the people to their King, are reciprocal—That the people may RESIST a Monarch, who endeavours to subvert the religion, laws, and liberties of his subjects; and that although “to declare war, is the prerogative of the King; to grant or withhold the means of carrying it on, is the privilege of the people, through their representatives.”

I HAVE attempted to enumerate some, among thousands, of the WRITTEN proofs of the existence of a constitution; and of our right to the enjoyment of one, on certain known and fixed principles. But even charters and constitutional statutes, are only testimonials of IMMEMORIAL RIGHTS and

PRIVILEGES ; and whatever infringes on them should be nugatory and void. Countries long deprived of such blessings, that cannot plead the argument drawn from prescription, naturally fly to parchment declarations, as means of arresting them in their flight. But the claims of Britons and Irishmen, are not only founded on the nature of man, but have been preserved by a living and active principle, which neither the revolution of time, nor the encroachments of regal power, have been able to obliterate from their memories, nor extinguish in their breasts.

THE several rights mentioned in this paper, have been occasionally circumscribed ; but none of them have been extinguished. The encroachments on the Constitution have proceeded, at one time, from the despotic influence of the Monarch, as in the reign of James II.—at another, from the tyrannical or avaricious temper of the people themselves.—An instance of the last kind, we had in the American war. The English, by aiming at unreasonable power, and iniquitous revenue, involved themselves in an immense debt ; and in order to pay the interest of it, they have been obliged to give up a share of their liberty, by submitting to Excise laws, (which render an Englishman's house no longer his castle) and to other unconstitutional acts ; just as an extravagant individual feels his freedom abridged by his imprudence. These violations of the Constitution, it has generally been the care, and is always the duty of the people to watch with a jealous eye. It is of such abuses that all true patriots complain, and seek redress. To the removal of them, they study to direct the attention of the people ; knowing from reason, history, and daily experience, that when thus purified, the British Constitution would answer the purposes of good government better, not only than any other that has ever been tried, but than any that has ever been imagined. This is the unanimous sentiment of the patriotic Irishmen, who, on former trying occasions were signalized by their abilities and their virtues. The people have every reason to rely upon the wisdom and the patriotism of such men, and no reason to suspect them of desertion. But there *are* men, whom the people should *try* before they TRUST.—They should place their confidence in the patriot.

whom I have described, rather than in those persons whom I am going to mention. There are persons who endeavour, in their speeches and actions, to drive things by precipitate and premature violence, to a greater extremity than any one thought of before them; who seem to pay little regard to peace and good order; but speak familiarly of bloodshed and devastation; who laugh at a government that has stood the test of ages, and secured the domestic comfort, the internal quiet, and the personal liberty of the people, as well as extended the power and supported the dignity of the country abroad, better than any other that has ever been heard of. These men trusting to, and insulting your ignorance, throw out certain crude and fantastical ideas, which, instead of being justified by experience, are nothing more than guess-work and conjecture. Among these, is that absurd notion, and notable discovery, that the English have no Constitution.—Now we know, that till lately, the English were the only people that knew what a Constitution meant; that in a political sense even the very word was peculiar to their language, and borrowed from it, by those who lately had no such term, because they had no such idea!—that *THEY* therefore knew best what it meant; and if others wished to express a different meaning, they should have invented a different word. Such men as these are no more worthy of your confidence, than braggadocios, bullies, or impostors of any other class.

REGULATE the PRACTICE of our government by its PRINCIPLES; give us Parliaments FREQUENTLY CHOSEN, and REALLY RETURNED *by the great body of* THE PEOPLE, and we shall enjoy all that the wise and good have looked for, or that can ever be found, in FREE GOVERNMENT.

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#### ADDITIONAL NOTES.

SIR John Thompson, afterwards Lord Haversham, in his memoirs of the Earl of Anglesea, informs us, that, “from the 1st of Edward III. (1327) to the 14th Henry IV. (1412) “in the space of 85 years, there are extant 72 original writs “for the summons of Parliament; so that allowing 40 days

“ from the tests to the returns of the writs, and but one month for the sittings of Parliament, there will not be a year’s interval between the dissolution of one Parliament and the summons of another.” And there are now two laws in force for the *annual* meeting of the King’s Parliament, viz. 4th and 36th of Edward III.

THE early attention of Parliament to prevent the fatal effects of corrupt influence on its members, has been seldom noticed. It appears demonstratively to have been the sense of Parliament in these days, that those who had a vote in granting a tax should have no concern in the collection of it; of course a *Place Bill* is not a novelty in the Constitution. In Edward III. it was particularly provided, that “ no Knights of Shires, Citizens, or Burgeesses, returned to Parliament, should be collectors for the taxes or subsidies granted to the King.” And when a capitation tax was granted, 4th Richard II. (1380) it was also enacted, that “ no Knight, Citizen, or Burgess, of this Parliament, should be collector of this money; but that the King should appoint such as should equally levy it, according to the meaning of the grant, throughout the Kingdom.”

THE following spirited reply was given by the Parliament to a declaration of Richard II. twelve years before the deposition of that King : viz. 1387.

“ WE have an ancient Constitution ; and it was not many ages since experimented, (it grieves us that we must mention it) that if the King, through any evil council, or weak obstinacy, or contempt of his people, or out of a perverse or froward wilfulness, or by any other irregular courses, shall alienate himself from his people, and *refuse to govern by the laws and statutes of the realm*, according to the laudable ordinances, and their faithful advice; but will throw himself headlong into wild designs, and stubbornly exercise his own singular arbitrary will; that, from that time, it shall be lawful for his people, by their full and free assent and consent, to *depose that King* from his throne, and in his stead to establish some other of the royal race upon the same.”



THOUGHTS  
ON THE BRITISH CONSTITUTION.

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No. VIII.

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JANUARY 25.

“THE History of Greece, by describing the incurable evils  
“inherent in every form of republican policy, evinces  
“the inestimable benefits resulting to liberty itself, from  
“the lawful dominion of hereditary Kings, and the steady  
“operation of well regulated Monarchy.”

GILLIES' HIST. GREECE.

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AT this period of unaccountable revolution in government and sentiment, every mind capable of reflection must be more or less occupied in conjectural anticipation of the event. Humanity revolts at the idea of civil commotion, and fondly embraces every plan, however chimerical, for the extinction of animosity and an union of interests. It is vain, at this enlightened æra, to attempt the conviction of mankind by assertions devoid of argument, but supported by power.

A SPIRIT of enquiry pervades all ranks ; it cannot be suppressed. It is now received as an incontrovertible position, that every office in a State should be instituted not for the aggrandizement of individuals, but for *public utility*. By this test every institution is scrutinized. We ask, if one was designed in wisdom ; another administered with integrity ; a third attended with the advantages proposed ?

THIS mode of investigation is equally tranquil and rational. Abusive establishments must sink under the weight of public opinion, obtained by cool enquiry, and confirmed by reason.

I READ with concern the inflammatory publications of wild reformers. They are incapable of appreciating our Constitution. The establishment of a REPUBLIC in a neighbouring

nation, from which we have often borrowed sentiments and manners, may seduce to imitation the unreflecting many, and afford a plausible pretext for the malignant activity of the disaffected few ; few to the Constitution, but *many* to its Administration.

It is almost needless to display the beauty and wisdom of our Constitution. The advantages of republican, aristocratical, and monarchical governments are happily blended, and many of their defects excluded. The words of the profound and elegant JENINS should be emblazoned in letters of gold at this period—" I can more readily admire the liberal spirit and integrity, than the sound judgment of any man, who prefers a republican form of government, in this, or *any* other empire of equal extent, to a monarchy so qualified and limited as ours. I am convinced, that neither is it in theory, the wisest system of government, nor practicable in this country. Yet, though I hope the English Constitution will for ever preserve its original monarchical form, I would have the manners of the people purely and strictly republican. I do not mean the licentious spirit of anarchy and riot—I mean a general attachment to the commonweal distinct from any partial attachment to persons or families ; an implicit submission to the laws only, and an affection to the magistrate, proportioned to the integrity and wisdom with which he distributes justice to his people and administers their affairs."

In proportion to my attachment to the constitution, is my indignation at its profligate abuse. That state must be on the brink of dissolution, when its servants deride public opinion, and require no other sanction for their measures than their own venal approbation. Amongst whom, every sentiment of honour and idea of rectitude are sacrificed to private interest ; and who mingle in the usual intercourses of life, without blushing for their depravity, or feeling embarrassed in the presence of unfulfilled virtue. Popular controul must be purely nominal where the executive power can command a majority for the enactment of laws.—This majority obtained, not by views of public advantage, nor

guided by constitutional principles, have made a dishonourable surrender of their judgment for personal emolument.

Is this declamation and an empty parade of words ? Let every honest unprejudiced mind reflect. A celebrated historian has said " the principles of a free constitution are irrecoverably lost, when the legislative power is appointed by the executive."

CORRUPTION in a free constitution, must be always gradual and imperceptible. The public mind, accustomed to freedom, would repel with indignation every palpable encroachment on their unquestionable rights.—But when oppressed beneath the weight of accumulated corruption, it loses its native energy, and the conscious dignity of independence. Even when the people abandon the spirit of the constitution, they still retain a partial attachment to its forms.

THE most detested of the Roman Emperors, disguised their enormities by the formalities of justice. They dignified the senate, to render it an accomplice ; and when it had served as the instrument, it became the victim, of their insatiate ambition.

WHEN the body of the people are so far degenerated as to be amused with forms ; when their opinion is disregarded and their wishes ungratified by the legislative department ; what must be the consequence ? I do not wish to anticipate evils by reflection. I think and hope they will be obviated by A TIMELY REFORM. One of the most ardent wishes of my heart, is, that our constitution may be restored to its original purity, without intestine convulsion. Government should remember there is a certain *point of depression*, from which a retrograde motion commences. The people should be instructed, that there are constitutional means of redress ; and that when the public mind is fully declared, it must be obeyed.

I HAVE often been amazed at the various and opposite opinions of men in private life, concerning the administration of government, who could have no personal interest in per-

petuating abuse. One description is styled *MODERATE*, whose true motive is self-ease;—they think liberty will last their life, and leave posterity to shift for themselves. Another order is denominated *LEVELLERS*: I believe *their* zeal for reformation proceeds from misinformation. The greater part of mankind have not time to consult the annals of their ancestors, to trace the gradual introduction of corruption, to compare different periods of the same society, and to deduce conclusions of their respective felicity. Tacitus and Pliny were conversant with the productions and characters of Cicero and Cato, and imbibed their zeal.

*THOUGHTS*  
*ON THE BRITISH CONSTITUTION.*

No. IX.

FEBRUARY 15.

“ It often comes to pass, that in governments, where part of  
 “ the legislative consists of representatives, chosen by the  
 “ people, that in tract of time this representation becomes  
 “ very unequal, and disproportionate to the reasons it was  
 “ first established upon. To what gross absurdities the following of custom, when reason has left it, may lead, we  
 “ may be satisfied, when we see the bare *name* of a town,  
 “ of which there remain not so much as the ruins; where  
 “ scarce so much housing as a sheep-cote, or more inhabitants than a shepherd, is to be found, send as many representatives to the grand assembly of law-makers, as a  
 “ whole county, numerous in people, and powerful in  
 “ riches.”

LOCKE.

THE Author of these Thoughts cannot render more essential service to his country, than by preparing a brief abstract of the several principles of A REFORMED REPRESENTATION, recommended by the highest authorities, and some of

them in actual practice in America. The inhabitants of that country, under the guidance of as great and virtuous men as any people were ever blessed with, and well acquainted with the errors that have crept into the British Government, give us a model for improving the representative part of it. This number is dedicated to Mr GRATTAN, and those Societies at present occupied in digesting plans of reform. If it shall furnish a single valuable hint, by bringing under the eye a general view of the several schemes proposed for renovating the Third Branch of our Legislature, the Author will deem his trouble amply rewarded.

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#### EARL OF CHATHAM.

AMPUTATION of depopulated boroughs, and an increase of county members. Speaking of the knights of shires, "Would to God, (he said) that respectable representation were augmented to a greater number, in order to infuse fresh health and vigour into the sound part of our representation." In a vein of prophecy respecting *boroughs*, he called them, "the rotten part of the constitution. It cannot last the century. If it do not drop off, it must be *amputated*."

#### DUKE OF RICHMOND.

AN account of the whole number of males of age in the kingdom (paupers included) is to be taken and divided by the number of members to be sent, which will find the quota of electors, to chuse one member. From the best accounts, it would be in England about two thousand six hundred. These are to be formed into districts or boroughs from the most contiguous parishes, and by having all the elections throughout the kingdom in one and the same day, and taken in each parish, all fear of riots and tumults vanishes.

COMPENSATION made for disfranchized boroughs, as a matter of expediency, not of right.

THE present number of members in the House of Commons preserved.

PARLIAMENTS annual.

UNDECIDED respecting Catholics voting in Ireland.

BALLOT not advisable.



DOCTOR PRICE.

ABOLITION of decayed boroughs.

COMPENSATION to the proprietors of enslaved boroughs, as a matter of expediency. He says, "The necessity of abolishing such boroughs is very apparent. There cannot be worse nuisances in a state."

THE right of voting extended to all that have property, to a certain value; every county divided into six districts, each of which to chuse one representative, leaving the remaining representatives to be chosen by the largest towns and boroughs.

ROMAN Catholics of property, to vote in common with Protestants.

ANNUAL Parliaments.

REV. MR. WYVILL.

ABOLITION of decayed boroughs. Compensation to every person immediately affected by it; and permission to the disfranchised electors to vote in the counties in lieu of their boroughs.

RIGHT of voting extended to all persons paying taxes in the counties, cities, and boroughs. Roman Catholics included; and to all leaseholders for life, or for a term exceeding 30 years, the yearly value of whose estates shall be at least 40 shillings.

THE number of members diminished by the disfranchisement of boroughs, to be thrown into the counties, the capital, and considerable unrepresented towns.

ANNUAL Parliaments preferable even to triennial.

DOCTOR JEBB.

UNIVERSAL suffrage.

THE country divided into districts, each district returning one member.

OR if the former cannot be had, disfranchisement of some of the boroughs, and compensation. Right of election transferred to townships or districts.

CATHOLICS to vote.

ANNUAL Parliaments.

THE constituent body, not the legislative, to form the plan of reform.

LORD EFFINGHAM.

COUNTIES and cities to remain just as they are at present.

COUNTIES to be divided into four or more classes, according to their importance in the national scale, considering their population, agriculture, and manufactures.

EACH to return from four to ten or twelve burgeses, making in the whole the same number of members as at present.

EVERY man paying scot and lot, to have a vote for burgeses.

THE poll to be taken on a certain day in every parish, before the parish officers and principal inhabitants.

COMPENSATION for disfranchised boroughs.

BALLOT not advisable.

TRIENNIAL Parliaments.

MAJOR CARTRIGHT.

UNIVERSAL suffrage. Election by ballot. Annual Parliaments.

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#### HEADS OF A PLAN,

Presented to the Dungannon Meeting of 1783, by the *Ulster Committee of Correspondence*, and by them referred to the National Convention.

DECAYED boroughs disfranchized; and the diminution of members thereby occasioned, thrown into considerable towns, not at present represented; and into the county, city, and great town representation.

**COMPENSATION** to the Patrons of disfranchized boroughs, and for those boroughs which having had the elective franchise vested in a few, become free cities or boroughs.

**QUALIFICATION** in counties:—Every resident Protestant male (ideots, criminals, &c. excepted) possessed of a freehold of 40 shillings, or any kind of property to the value of 20*l.* over his legal debts.

In cities and towns, like qualification;—also a person having a living in a house for which he pays 5*l.* per annum or upwards.

**MENIAL** servants excluded as voters, in county, city, or town, unless they be householders paying taxes.

**VOTER** swears to his qualification, and that he will vote for the candidate he believes most likely to support the liberties of the people in Parliament. Also to take the oath against bribery. Votes once taken, to stand unimpeachable; heavy penalty against a voter falsely swearing, and loss of his franchise.

**MEMBERS** in Parliament (besides the present oaths in use) to swear that neither they, nor any person for them, with their knowledge, bribed any elector to vote for them.

**ANNUAL** Parliaments.

**ELECTION** by ballot.

**Extension** of suffrage to such description of Roman Catholics as the National Convention should deem proper for that trust.

**ALL** elections held on the same day, in the different baronies, half-baronies, or parishes; so as to finish in one or a very few days.

**TOTAL** exclusion of placemen and pensioners: fix public officers allowed to sit in the House, without voting; at the nomination of the Lord Lieutenant.

*Plan of the National Convention of Volunteer Delegates assembled in Dublin, in 1783.*

DECAYED boroughs to be opened, by the admission to suffrage of a barony or baronies, parish or parishes, as the case may require.—[See note.]

ANY city, town, borough, or manor, (which hath hitherto returned members) shall be considered decayed, that does not now contain a number of electors, over and above pot-wallopers, not less than 200 in *Ulster*, 100 in *Munster* and *Connaught*, and 70 in *Leinster*. At any time hereafter when such cities, &c. &c. shall so far fall into decay as not to furnish that number of electors, they shall cease to return members until the due number be supplied.

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NOTES.

IT is observable that the above mode of opening the boroughs was recommended by Mr. Flood, and formed on a precedent within the present reign, of *SHOREHAM* in England. In 2d George III. (1762.) that borough (in consequence of the great corruption introduced by "the christian club") was thrown open to the forty-shilling freeholders, in the adjoining Rape of Bramber; whereby 1,200 voters were added; and the borough of *CRICKLADE* was opened (in 1782) in a similar manner and for like reasons.

A LATE valuable publication, the *History of Boroughs*, makes the following remark on these two cases. "The practical experiment that has been tried at Shoreham and Cricklade, of the advantages which would attend a Parliamentary Reform, or even a similar disfranchisement of the corrupt and decayed boroughs, is a complete refutation of every objection that has been urged against that important measure, as these boroughs have since been represented by independent country gentlemen, and every election has since been conducted with constitutional decorum."

MR. PONSONBY's bill of reform, introduced into the Irish House of Commons, in the Session of 1793, and to be discussed in the following Session, adopts the principle of the Shoreham reform, which the National Convention of the Volunteers of Ireland likewise did, ten years before.

IN cities, towns, boroughs, or manors, *not decayed*, (which hath hitherto returned members,) every Protestant, who possesses a freehold interest, yearly value of 10*l.* originally set for 31 years or upwards, and 15 years unexpired at the time, to be a voter in such city, &c. &c. not decayed.

IN cities, towns, boroughs, or manors, (deemed by this plan decayed) which hath hitherto returned members; every Protestant who possesses a leasehold, yearly value 5*l.* originally set for 31 years or upwards, and 15 years unexpired at the time, to be a voter in such city, &c. decayed.

IN all cities, towns, boroughs, or manors, forty shilling freeholders and upwards, to have votes in such cities, &c.

NON-RESIDENT electors in any county, city, town, borough, or manor, not to be permitted to vote therein, unless their right arises from freehold or leasehold property of 20*l.* per annum.

IN counties, besides their present electors, persons possessing leasehold interests for years, originally set for 61 years or upwards, of 10*l.* yearly value, and 20 years unexpired, to be voters in counties.

TRIENNIAL Parliaments.

PLACEMEN vacate their seats, but capable of re-election.

PENSIONERS for life, or 21 years and upwards, vacate their seats, but capable of re-election. No other pensioners capable of being returned.

POLLS taken for counties, by deputies in each barony.

ELECTIONS, *viva voce*

ABROGATION of all corporation bye laws, hitherto made, or to be made, contracting the franchise of electors.

AN oath taken by members, against the purchase of votes, also against accepting a pension, during his holding a seat in Parliament, and that he has not accepted one since the test of the writ. A member convicted of perjury respecting this oath, by a jury, to be for ever disqualified for sitting.



THOUGHTS  
ON THE BRITISH CONSTITUTION.

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No. X.

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FEBRUARY 18.

CONTINUED VIEW of the several Plans proposed, at different times, for A REFORM IN THE REPRESENTATION of the people in Parliament.

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“ It being the interest, as well as intention, of the people,  
“ to have a fair and equal representative, whoever brings  
“ it nearest to that, is an undoubted friend to, and estab-  
“ lisher of the government; and cannot miss the consent  
“ and approbation of the community.

LOCKE.

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PLAN of the NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF DELEGATES, (in their civil capacity) consisting of five members from each county, city, and great town, assembled in Dublin, in 1785.

DISFRANCHISEMENT of all cities, towns, boroughs, and manors in *Ulster*, not containing 300 electors; and in the other three provinces, not containing 150 electors.

COMPENSATION for extinguished franchise.

THE deficiency of members thereby occasioned, to be thrown into the county representation, and by restoring elective franchise to the body at large, and adding members to great cities and populous towns.

ELECTIONS by ballot.

PARLIAMENTS not to exceed triennial.

PLACEMENT and pensioners vacate their seats.

RESIDENCE and registry of voters.

AN oath administered to the members against bribery and corruption.—[This is even recommended by *Blackstone*.]

MR. PITT,

WHEN a minister in 1785, moved leave to bring in a bill to amend the representation, the plan of which was :

THE disfranchisement of 36 of the decayed, or decaying boroughs.

THEIR 72 members to be distributed to the counties, and such chief towns and cities as are not at present represented.

COMPENSATION to be made to proprietors of such disfranchised boroughs, by a fund of one million of money set apart for the purpose. That their acceptance of the terms shall be by the voluntary act of two thirds of the electors ; and not compulsory ; but the appreciated value of the borough to be placed out at compound interest.

RIGHT of voting in counties to be extended to copyholders, as well as freeholders.

MR. FOX opposed the idea of compensation to the holders of boroughs, so disfranchised.

MOTION lost—248 to 174.

THIS plan was approved of by the Revd. Mr. Wyvill, of Yorkshire, and disliked by the late Dr. Jebb.

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MR. FLOOD proposed the following plan in 1785 ; in the *Irish House of Commons* :

ANNIHILATION of all bye laws in corporations, that diminish or take away any portion of elective franchise, from persons for whom it was originally intended by charter ; to which he said there was hardly a corporation in Ireland that had not been subject.

EVERY resident Protestant leasehold-housekeeper in a borough or town corporate, to become a voter.

SUCH leaseholders in boroughs, and all 40 shilling freeholders must be registered and resident : and no freeholder to vote in his county, if non-resident therein, unless his freehold be worth 100l. per annum.

UNIVERSAL registration. For counties, to be done in the baronies.

No non-resident elector in towns corporate or boroughs, to vote in said towns corporate or boroughs, unless possessed of freehold property to the amount of 100*l.* per annum.

COUNTY elections to be held in each barony, and all on the same day.

IN order to restore population in decayed and contracted boroughs, commissioners to be sent into each county, city, town corporate and borough; to enquire into its particular circumstances, and ascertain the proportion of persons whose votes should return one member. He guessed that the following was about that proportion, viz. In *Leinster*, *Munster*, and *Connaught*, no borough having less than 70 voters, to return more than one representative; and in *Ulster*, no borough with less than 140 voters, to return more than one representative. The diminution of members occasioned thereby, he did not think of consequence; conceiving that it might reduce the number to 240 or 250, instead of the present 300. When the number of voters amount to that specified, then such city, town corporate and borough, shall again return two members as formerly.

IN 1790, MR. FLOOD alleged that there were only two possible modes of amending the representation; by either laying open the boroughs, or adding to the representation of counties.

IN that year he moved in the British House of Commons, that 100 members be added to the present number, which hundred to be elected by the *resident housekeepers* throughout the kingdom of Great Britain. He said there must be a very respectable class of people in all countries, especially in England, where every man in the State was competent to pay 50 shillings annually in taxes; and that this would be a body with which Peers and great Commoners would have less influence than on most of them. Mr. Fox declared this was the best way of improving the representation he had yet

heard of.—A Mr. Batley's plan for opening boroughs was, that one or more of the adjacent towns should vote at the elections of members for the decayed place : as a bar against junctions of interest for influencing the returns, and against the probability of the electors being bribed.

A GENTLEMAN in Ireland recommended for the improvement of borough representation, that all persons possessed of perpetuities, within the county where the borough or boroughs are, should be allowed to vote. This would be objectionable, as every man possessed of such perpetuity should have a vote in *every* borough in the county, which would be more than he should have. That however may be obviated by forming the county into as many districts as there are boroughs, and allowing only those possessed of perpetuities within each district, to vote for the particular borough contained therein.

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REPRESENTATION IN THE CONGRESS OF THE  
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,  
AS AGREED TO IN 1787.

CONSTITUTION of *Massachusetts* :—Every male of twenty-one years, possessed of a freehold estate of three pounds annual income, or other estate worth 60*l.* votes for a representative in their own assembly. *New-York* :—Every male of age, possessed of a freehold worth 20*l.* or renting yearly a tenement value 40*s.* votes for representatives, by ballot ; and the qualification of a voter for a member in the senate, is his possession of a freehold of the value of 100*l.* *New-Jersey* :—Inhabitants of age, worth 50*l.* proclamation money, vote for representatives in the senate and assembly. *Pennsylvania* :—Every freeman of age, who has paid taxes twelve months, is a voter. Sons of freeholders to vote, tho' they have not paid taxes. A member incapable of serving in the House of Representatives more than 4 years in 7, and they are chosen by ballot, as are also its delegates to Congress, who are supersedable at pleasure. In this state alone there is not a SENATE, and the executive power is vested in a Presi-

dent and Council. *Maryland* :—Freemen of age, with a freehold of 50 acres of land, vote for the House of Delegates. *North Carolina* :—Senate and House of Commons, both chosen by ballot; freemen of age possessed of a freehold of 50 acres, vote for the members of the Senate; freemen of age who have paid for 12 months public taxes, vote for their House of Commons. *South Carolina* :—An elector must be a free white man, of age, possessing a freehold of 50 acres, or a town lot. *Georgia* .—Male white inhabitants of age, possessing a freehold of 10l. value, vote by ballot. *Connecticut* :—The old freeholders continue electors. *Virginia* :—Males of age possessing 25 cultivated acres with a house, are voters.

CONGRESS. The legislative powers of the states is vested in a Congress, consisting of a Senate and House of Representatives. The Senate is elected for six years, the House of Representatives for two. The senators are thrown into three classes: 1st class vacate their seats at expiration of second year; 2d class at expiration of fourth year; and 3d class at the expiration of sixth year—so that one third is chosen every second year. Each state returns two senators, whose qualifications are that they must be 30 years of age, and have been nine years a citizen of the states. A member of the House of Representatives must be 25 years of age, and seven years a citizen. The whole number of representatives of the states (as well as direct taxes) are apportioned, from time to time, among the different states, according to the number of free persons in each. Enumerations are for this purpose made every ten years, and the number of representatives from a state determined accordingly. They are to be returned at the rate of one to every free persons.

At any time when two-thirds of both houses shall deem the constitution defective, and requiring reform, they may propose amendments in it; or on an application of two-thirds of all the separate legislatures of the states, a convention shall be called for proposing amendments; which proposed alterations shall in either case become part of the constitution, as soon as ratified by the legislatures of three-fourths of the states, or by conventions in three-fourths thereof; as the one or the other mode may chance to be adopted by Congress.



A DELEGATE to Congress cannot hold any office in the gift of Congress, nor receive any salary, fee, or emolument ; but they are paid for their attendance by their constituents. No religious test taken by persons holding places of profit or trust.

THE President and Vice President hold their places four years, and are appointed by ballot in each state, by a body of electors equal in number to the joint number of representatives and senators returned to Congress by that state ; but no person can vote for either of these officers who holds any place himself under the states. The persons for whom the majority of all the states vote, are the elect. The President must be 35 years of age, and 14 years an inhabitant.

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It appears by the above sketch, that there is not a single state in America which does not require that an elector shall have a qualification of *property*, more or less. In FRANCE the populace were, by their late Constitution, electors, down to very low degree ; so low as the payment of about a British half-crown yearly in taxes : and the qualifications for seats in the Assembly itself are not worth mentioning.

THOUGHTS  
ON THE BRITISH CONSTITUTION.

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No. XI.

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CONTINUED VIEW of the several Plans proposed, at different times, for A REFORM IN THE REPRESENTATION of the people in Parliament.

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*EXTRACT FROM A PLAN OF REFORM,*  
SUBMITTED TO THE CONSIDERATION OF THE FRIENDS OF THE  
CONSTITUTION, LIBERTY, AND PEACE, IN DUBLIN;

*By one of its Members.*

THE House of Commons to consist of three hundred members ; but the present mode of returning them to cease.

EVERY person in Ireland having an habitation with more fire-places than one, to pay the tax of 11s. 4½d.—this tax to be distinct from the hearth-money tax, but to be collected by the hearth-money collectors, and payment to be enforced in the manner prescribed, for the enforcing the payment of hearth-money. Where the person paying this tax of 11s. 4½d. is a man of the age of twenty-one years, he is qualified to be an elector. To prevent the word habitation being misunderstood, it means only, what the law deems a man's castle, into which the sheriff cannot make a forcible entry, under any civil writ.

EVERY person in Ireland, having an habitation with one fire place, and in the actual possession of more than one acre of land, Irish measure, to pay the now hearth-money on one hearth; and to be liable to every other tax. But where such person is a man of the age of twenty-one years, and both his habitation and said land are in the same barony, he is also qualified to be an elector. These two qualifications, above specified, to be the only ones that can confer the elective franchise.

ALL counties of cities and towns, and every lordship, district, borough, or place, now sending members to parliament, to be considered part of the present thirty-two counties, to which single sheriffs are now annually appointed. Each of such counties of cities and towns, and each of such lordships, districts, boroughs and places, to be henceforth annexed to such of the said thirty-two counties, as the houses contained in them, are reckoned part of, in the return made to the House of Commons, on the 22d of March, 1792, by Thomas Wray, inspector general of hearths.

THE three hundred members, in the Commons House of Parliament, to be distributed amongst the said thirty-three counties, as follows :

Cork	33	Members	having	76,739	houses
Down	16	do	having	38,351	do
Tyrone	14	do	having	31,814	do
Tipperary	13	do	having	30,793	do
Antrim	13	do	having	30,314	do
Mayo	13	do	having	29,683	do
Limerick	12	do	having	28,932	do
Donegall	11	do	having	24,976	do
Galway	10	do	having	24,268	do
Meath	10	do	having	23,133	do
Armagh	10	do	having	22,900	do
L:Derry	10	do	having	22,836	do
Monaghan	9	do	having	21,566	do
Wexford	9	do	having	21,011	do
Kerry	9	do	having	20,213	do
Waterford	8	do	having	18,796	do
Roscommon	8	do	having	18,157	do
Cavan	8	do	having	18,139	do
Clare	8	do	having	18,050	do
Kilkenny	8	do	having	17,719	do
Queen's co.	7	do	having	15,685	do
Sligo	6	do	having	14,962	do
King's co.	6	do	having	14,961	do
Co. of the city of Dublin	} 6	do	having	14,349	do
Westmeath		6	do	having	13,951

Louth	5	members	having	12,827	houses
Leitrim	5	do	having	12,378	do
Fermanagh	5	do	having	11,983	do
Wicklow	5	do	having	11,507	do
Co. Dublin	5	do	having	10,759	do
Kildare	4	do	having	10,605	do
Longford	4	do	having	10,348	do
Carlow	4	do	having	8,397	do

THE houses herein specified make in all 701,102, agreeable to the return made by Mr. Wray, of all the houses in the kingdom, herein before mentioned.

EVERY elector in the kingdom to give as many votes, as there are members for the county, in which such elector gives his vote. But no man to vote in more counties than one, at any general election. Where however an elector is qualified in more counties than one, he is to have his election, in which county he votes.

THE mode of taking the votes, for all the counties, (except the county of the city of Dublin) to be by barony polls, where the high constable of each barony shall preside.

EVERY man is eligible to be elected, who is not a placeman or pensioner, and every elector may put down the names of such persons, as he pleases, though not declared as candidates.

IF any Elector, mediately or immediately, takes, or any candidate, mediately or immediately, gives any bribe, reward, or recompence whatsoever, for or on account of any election, the elector or candidate found guilty thereof, to be precluded from ever voting in future, for any member to be sent to the House of Commons, and to be utterly incapable of ever sitting there himself.

EVERY man returned to Parliament, to be obliged to serve. He is, however, to receive the sum of 1l. 2s. 9d. out of the public treasury, for every day he attends during the sitting of Parliament.

**TRIENNIAL Parliaments.**

No man to be eligible to be elected into the House of Commons, who is not of the age of twenty-five years, on the day of his election.

EVERY man taking his seat in the House of Commons is to swear, that he has not directly or indirectly, given any entertainment, bribe, reward, or promise whatsoever to procure his election. That he will not vote for enlarging the duration of the House, beyond the period by this law established. That he will not vote for any form of government, different from that of King, Lords, and Commons. And that he will to the best of his judgment conscientiously discharge his duty in Parliament.

EVERY member of the House of Commons to be as liable to arrest as any other subject. But where any member of the House of Commons shall remain in actual custody for fourteen days together, during the sitting of Parliament, his seat is to be vacated, and he is to be incapable of re-election, unless he shall be at large on the day of the commencement of the poll. The certificate of two members, of such actual custody, to be, as in other cases, a sufficient authority to the speaker to issue his warrant to fill up the vacancy.

No member to be answerable in any manner, out of the House of Commons, for what he says in it. But where four-fifths of the House agree, any member may be expelled. In case of expulsion, the member expelled cannot sit again in that Parliament.

ANY member who shall accept of any place or pension, thereby vacates his seat, and cannot sit again in the House of Commons, whilst he retains either place or pension. This rule does not however extend to the speaker's salary, nor to the offices of sheriffs and justices of the peace, nor to any office to which there is no emolument annexed.

As no placemen or pensioner can be returned by the people, to the House of Commons, the King or his Viceroy, to have the power of naming seven persons, who are to sit and speak in that House, but not to vote.



As in the course of time, the populousness of counties must vary, a new list of the houses in every county, to be taken once in every twenty-one years, and then the number of members each county is to send to be again proportioned, according to the population of each. But the number of members altogether to continue at 300 and no more.

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### PLAN OF A PARLIAMENTARY REFORM.

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THE population of Ireland amounts to 4,200,000 nearly. —If the country was divided into 300 districts, nearly equal with respect to population, being collections of parishes, each district would contain 14,000 persons, and might return one member to Parliament.

THE number of members of the House of Commons might perhaps be usefully diminished.

IF it was necessary to make a bill for reform in a hurry, the division into 287 baronies would answer for the present, with members for the cities and towns.

EACH of the 300 districts might be subdivided into 20 inferior divisions, and each of these send five delegates, more or less in proportion to population, to some fixed place in the district to elect the member.

Though there is not the same occasion for this subdivision that there is in France, yet it would be highly useful. The lower classes are better qualified to choose an honest neighbour than to judge of a member of Parliament. In each district of 14,000 inhabitants, there would be at least 2000 voters; and experience has shewn that the votes of such a number cannot be taken without tumult.

ALL the primary assemblies should meet on the same day.

If two sets of assemblies were not thought necessary, the votes ought to be taken in different places.

THE qualifications for voting in the primary assemblies should be—

RESIDENCE within the district for one year before.

REGISTRY.

TWENTY-ONE years of age.

NON-VOTERS should be excused from all direct taxes.

THERE will probably be much variety of opinion on the question of qualification from property.

THE following qualifications with respect to property might perhaps answer.

OCCUPYING a certain quantity of arable land in the country—suppose five acres.

IN town, occupying a house of a certain rent, as 10l.

THE qualification of members of Parliament should be, if any,

HAVING resided for            years within            miles of the chief town of the district, or having been in Parliament before, &c.—A certain age, perhaps 25 years.

THE duration of Parliaments might be biennial or triennial, if the duration was fixed; but perhaps it would be better to let the duration be uncertain, to be determined by some method of chance properly secured against tricks.

THE manner of voting in Parliament, and in the electoral assemblies should evidently be viva voce, because otherwise their respective constituents could not know whether they deserved to be re-elected. But in primary assemblies it is a question of more difficulty. There is no doubt but that tenants would often vote against their landlords, if they dare.—But on the other hand, it ought to be considered that it is by

honest public actions that public principle is chiefly acquired and preserved, without which, no institutions can secure a continuance of freedom. The use of the ballot would give perpetual temptation to falsehood and envy. It is hardly possible to contrive a species of ballot, which shall not be liable to numerous frauds.

A SEAT in Parliament should be vacated,

By taking a place or pension,

By absence for a certain part of the session.

THE House of Commons should be an open court, their proceedings published by authority, and whenever a certain number of members, suppose five, demanded it, the names of those who voted on each side of a particular question should be published.

THE members should be entitled to a small salary, such as should barely defray the additional expence of residing in Dublin during the session.

WITH regard to compensation, whatever is most likely to quiet the country ought to be done. The holders of boroughs have hardly an equitable right to compensation, on the other hand it would be madness to risk commotion about such an object.

IF a compensation was determined on, it might be effected in this manner. An act of indemnity should be passed. A committee appointed, before which the property of boroughs should be proved. Those who prove property should obtain debentures to be paid out of a specific fund, which should be the savings of sinecure places and pensions, all of which (except a limited sum for pensions) should go into the public fund at the death of the present holders. In the revenues of sinecure places, I compute a great proportion of the fees of office in several legal offices.

## PRINCIPLES OF A BILL

For amending and improving the state of the representation of the people in parliament. Presented by MR. George Ponsonby, 19th July, 1793—and to be received in next sessions.

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PREAMBLE.—Whereas the state of the representation of the people in parliament is greatly defective, and it would tend much to protect the liberty of the subject, and to preserve our excellent constitution, if the people of this realm were more fairly and equally represented in parliament.

THE number of Knights to be elected and returned to represent each county within this kingdom, in any future parliament to be hereafter holden and kept within this realm, to be THREE instead of two.

THE number of citizens to be elected and returned to represent the *city* of Dublin in parliament, to be three; and the number of citizens to be elected and returned to represent the *city* of Cork in Parliament to be three.

THE power of electing and returning three members to serve in Parliament, confined to each of the thirty-two counties into which this kingdom is now divided, and to the cities of Dublin and Cork, and to no other counties, cities or towns whatsoever.

PREAMBLE.—And whereas enlarging the districts of the several cities and borough towns within this kingdom, would tend to render their elections of citizens and burgesses to serve in parliament, much more free and independent.

THE limits or precincts of every city, borough, town or manor having a right to send members to parliament, to extend to a space or distance of four miles from the said city, borough, town or manor, measured by a line to be drawn from some one place within the said city, borough, town or manor, as near the centre of the present site of the said city, borough, town or manor, as conveniently may be done, and to extend in every direction to a distance of four miles from

the said place and no further, so as thereby to make the circuit of the district round the said city, borough, town or manor equal to twenty-four miles in circumference or thereabouts.

WHERE any city, borough, town or manor, having a right to send members to serve in Parliament, shall be so situate as that a line of four miles cannot conveniently be drawn or measured in the manner directed, by reason of the vicinity of some other city, borough, town or manor having also a right to send members to serve in Parliament, or by reason of the proximity of the sea, then a certain district to be measured from the most central place within the said city, borough, town or manor, in such direction as can be best and most conveniently done, and which shall be equal, or as nearly as may be, to a space contained within a circumference of twenty-four miles, and which space shall be marked out and allotted as and for the district of the said city, borough, town or manor situate as aforesaid.

EVERY freeholder who shall be seised of a freehold of ten pounds value within the said district of a city, town, borough or manor, shall have a right to vote for members to serve in parliament for the said city, borough, town or manor, any former law or usage to the contrary notwithstanding; provided always, that the said person so claiming a right to vote at said election shall have been seised of his freehold one whole year before the test of the writ which issued for holding the said election, and shall have registered his freehold six months before the test of the said writ, pursuant to the act made in the                      year of his present Majesty, for the due registering of freeholds.

No person elected and admitted to the freedom of any corporation in any city or town corporate shall by virtue of such election and admission, have a right to vote for members to serve in parliament for the said city or town corporate, unless the said person shall have been seised of a *freehold tenement* of the value of *five pounds* by the year, within the said city or town corporate, upon which he or his family shall have resided for one whole year before the time of such election and admission.



NOTHING herein contained to extend to any person admitted, or who has a right to his freedom by reason of birth, marriage, or service to any trade or calling, but that all such rights shall remain in full force as if this act had not been made.

INHABITANTS of every city, borough, or town corporate, having a right to send members to serve in Parliament, who reside within the prescribed precincts or district of the said city, borough, or town corporate, and who shall have exercised any of the following trades or callings

for five years within the districts aforesaid, to from and after the                      day of                      to have a right to vote and be admitted to vote at the election of any representative or representatives to be chosen to represent said cities, boroughs or towns corporate in Parliament.

A MEMBER to serve in Parliament from and after the day of                      shall before he be admitted to his seat in parliament, take the oath following :

“ I do dolempnly swear that I have not, directly or indirectly, procured my election and return to parliament by the means of any sum or sums of money, whatsoever, or by any promise of any pecuniary reward whatsoever, and that I have not authorized any person whatsoever to give or promise any sum of money whatsoever for procuring me to be elected and returned a member to serve in parliament, and that if any such promise hath been made on my behalf I will not ratify or make good the same. So help me God.”

PROVIDED always, that nothing in this act shall extend, or in anywise be deemed or taken to extend to the cities of Waterford, Kilkenny, Limerick, Londonderry,

and the towns of                      but that all their rights, franchises and privileges, limits and precincts, shall remain and continue as if this act had not been made.

THOUGHTS  
ON THE BRITISH CONSTITUTION.

No. XII.

“ If it were probable that *every* man would give his vote  
“ freely, and without influence of any kind ; then, upon  
“ the true theory and general principles of liberty, every  
“ member of the community, however poor, should have  
“ a vote in electing those delegates, to whose charge is  
“ committed the disposition of his property, his liberty,  
“ and his life. But since that can hardly be expected in  
“ persons of indigent fortunes, or such as are under the  
“ immediate dominion of others, all popular states have  
“ been obliged to establish certain qualifications.”

BLACKSTONE.

“ The misfortune is, that the *deserted* BOROUGHs continue to  
“ be summoned.”

BLACKSTONE.

ON a review of the several schemes of PARLIAMENTARY REFORM, which in the three last numbers were laid before the public, it will easily be seen that whilst there are certain points on which almost every man differs from another, there are others on which all projectors exactly correspond. These latter, therefore, we may fairly set down as essential to a reform ; whatever other particulars it may embrace or exclude.

Of these essential features of reform, we may justly consider the disfranchisement, or enlargement, of decayed or close boroughs ; as occupying the chief place. In whatever point of view we regard a parliamentary reform, we are struck with the viciousness and absurdity, which vie with each other in this part of the existing system ; and we see with a clearness of evidence which renders demonstration superfluous, that no adequate degree of reform can ever be effected, until this mass of political pravity be fully and fairly done away.

ON this point, the light of reason bears so powerfully, and all the principles of the constitution point so directly to its importance, that it not only becomes unnecessary to dwell upon it, but we may fairly infer that if the minds of thinking men were not embarrassed by the variety of remedial plans, by the fancifulness of some and the extravagance of others, this political monster must, ere this, even in spite of interested and private views, have fallen a sacrifice to consistency and common benefit.

WHAT then at this day is so incumbent on all those who wish well to a Parliamentary Reform, as to unite their best endeavours for the removal of those obstacles which have hitherto retarded, and unless they are done away, must still retard the attainment of this most desirable object. And how can this be so effectually done as by endeavouring on this important subject, to discriminate between the wild sportings of imagination and the sober operations of reason? How; but by divesting the idea of Reform of every shred of fanatical extravagance, and sending it forth into the world, in the decent drapery of constitutional common sense.

THIS is the more necessary, because it is only by reducing political opinions to the standard of REASON, that an union of public sentiment can ever be obtained;—and in such an union only, can the Friends of Reform possess that rational force which will supersede and rise superior to every other.

IN considering those points on which the various reformers differ from each other, the extension of suffrage strikes us as of the greatest importance—"WHO OUGHT TO VOTE FOR MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT?" To this, therefore, let us direct our attention for the present; and that we may pursue the enquiry with certainty, let us recollect for a moment the real *design* of Parliamentary Representation.

IT is the very spirit and essence of the British Constitution, that no law should be made, nor tax imposed, without the consent of the nation. But the nation cannot deliberate. It is impossible for four millions to come together into one

place, for the purpose of communicating opinions, weighing reasons, and determining on the best measures. It has therefore been wisely ordained, that a number of persons, freely chosen, should be collected from the different parts of the kingdom, and that to them should be committed the trust of deliberating for the public good ; on this obvious principle, that the impartial determination of such a number of persons so chosen, and so collected, may fairly be considered as the unbiaſſed ſenſe of the people.

THUS, it is evident that the Houſe of Commons is not merely an organ for giving expreſſion to the popular voice—that it is not a registry office for receiving and recording the detail of local ſentiments, and giving the name of law to that which may happen to be predominant ; but that it is, on the contrary, intended by the conſtitution to be a great deliberative council, formed of the wiſeſt, the moſt virtuous, and the moſt independent men in the country.

LET then the unprejudiced enquirer after political truth aſk himſelf, how this idea of Parliamentary Representation may moſt effectually be realized—whether by extending the elective ſuffrage to ALL the male inhabitants of the country ; or by limiting it to ſuch perſons, as from the poſſeſſion of ſome property, have an actual ſtake in the country, and confequently feel themſelves intereſted in its peace, its liberty, and its proſperity.

IN every community it has been acknowledged as a leading political truth, that the exerciſe of political power ought not to be intruſted to thoſe who were generally unfit to uſe it for the public advantage ; and on this principle, females and minors have been univerſally excluded ; the former being conſidered as ſubject to influence—the latter being deemed incapable, from mental immaturity.

Now, if females and minors are juſtly excluded from the exerciſe of political power, on the ground of unſuitneſs, it neceſſarily follows, that where there is an equal unſuitneſs, there ought to be a ſimilar excluſion ; and if the principle be an equitable one in itſelf, it ought, in all juſtice, and indeed, a

*fortiori*, to be applied where both grounds of exclusion meet ; to those whose ignorance makes them incompetent, and whose indigence makes them dependent.

It will be understood that I speak of those who have, in strict propriety of speech, no property ; who pass thro' life earning their daily bread by their daily labour—but who have *saved* nothing ; have made no provision for their families or themselves ; for sickness or old age.

THAT these form a most useful and valuable class of the community, that they have a right to a just share of every political benefit, and that they are even entitled to the peculiar care and tenderness of the higher classes of society, I do most readily grant ;—but that they ought to be entrusted with political power, I deny ; because it would be dangerous to the Commonwealth, useless to themselves, and inconsistent with every principle of sound policy.

To the exercise of even the lowest political function, some degree of reflection and foresight is indispensably necessary. Without these, he who exercises it, unavoidably becomes either the play-thing of accident or the instrument of design. But reflection and foresight are seldom to be found amongst those who have *absolutely no property*. It is then only, when a man has acquired something, that he looks backward with satisfaction, or forward with solicitude. Till then, he literally takes no thought for to-morrow. He has nothing to lose, he is fearless of danger—and may have something to gain by public confusion.

“ Cantabit vacuus coram latrone viator.”

AND yet these unreflecting and improvident sons of poverty, form the great numerical majority of the community. Consequently an unqualified suffrage, would actually throw into their hands the great weight of political power. But in this case who could calculate the consequences ? Could we promise ourselves a respectable legislature, when the choice should rest with those who are incapable of judging of the necessary qualifications of its members ? Could regularity



of government be hoped for when the great wheel, which gives motion to the whole political machine, was surrendered to the mismanagement of the uninformed multitude? Or would it be possible to ensure for any given space of time, the existence of law, of order, of property, of personal liberty, or of personal safety; when the whole fabrick of the constitution were thus absurdly committed to a basis of shifting sand.

Is it necessary to repeat the trite observation, that "Civil Liberty, when pursued to an extreme, like every other extreme, may merge into its opposite, into despotism;" the worst species of despotism, that of the many; where irresistible power is directed by capricious versatility? Need I remark, that that only is a free government, where reason is paramount; where by a judicious distribution of powers, the few are as safe from the encroachments of the many, as the many are from those of the few; and where national wisdom is kept in unrestrained and regular action for the national benefit. This, and this only, is genuine liberty. This alone can answer the diversified exigencies of society.—But could this even exist, if the predominance of political power were to be committed to those who can give no security for their conduct; and whose misconduct there would be no means of correcting?

Would the multitude, who should be thus called forward into political action, reap any advantage? Certainly not. Because whatever tends to lessen the stability and regularity of government, must in the same proportion, be injurious to their best interests. It is only under a regular government, growing principally out of *the middle orders* (those true sources of the power, virtue and knowledge of all communities) that the occupations of life, which give employment to the working class, can be carried on with spirit or steadiness. What advantage under heaven, would it be to the day-labourer, to be specifically represented in the House of Commons? Would such a representation, in any degree ameliorate his condition? or could the possession of suffrage secure to the working poor a greater proportion of political advantages,

comparatively with the other classes of the community, than they enjoy even in the present state of things? The working poor will then be best represented, when the wisest and most effectual measures are pursued for promoting national prosperity, because theirs is involved in it; for giving encouragement to industry; facility to commerce; and what is absolutely essential to all these, security to property. I say they will then be best represented; because their happiness will then be best provided for, they will be employed more regularly, and they will be paid better. In a free state the higher ranks of society, as they advance, bring forward the lower ones along with them. The progression for instance of the mercantile rank, is felt by the meanest drudge who carries the merchant's bales, from his vessel to his waggon.—But more directly, the thriving influence extends from the merchant to the manufacturer; from the manufacturer to the husbandman—and from the husbandman to the lowest cottager. But can any of these advantages exist where there is not a stable government; and will any man be hardy enough to ensure a stable government, where the whole multitude is brought forward into political action? But how poorly would that multitude be compensated for the loss of certain employment, and perhaps even of the common necessities of life; by a triennial, a biennial, or even an annual exercise of political power?

If it be said, that the universal possession of the elective franchise is a necessary security against the encroachments of government, I reply, that the security lodged with the individual, should be proportionate to the danger of encroachment. But the difference in this respect, between a man who has *some* property, and him who has absolutely *none*, is almost infinite. It is not personal liberty, but property, against which the abuses of power are chiefly pointed. The political machinery of corrupt statesmen is constructed for one end only—the extortion of revenue. But it is property, to which this machinery must be applied. With property, therefore, in all reason and in all justice, should the counteracting power, in a certain degree be entrusted.

LET no man say that, by an exclusion from this power, the poor are injured. If there is truth in the foregoing observations, they are not injured but benefited; because by this means they are preserved not only from injuring others, but from injuring themselves. If they are injured, it is as the thoughtless youth is injured, whose estate is withheld from him until his mind is matured by experience.—If they are injured, it is an injury which our minors and our females, the hope and the happiness of the community, suffer in common with them.

It is scarcely possible that this exclusion should even in a single instance, have an unfair operation, because it is not likely, that it should extend to an individual, who has the habits necessary for making a proper choice at an election.—For, if the qualification were even higher than it is at present, provided it were extended (as it ought in all reason) to every species of permanent property, it would be attainable by every person of industrious and virtuous dispositions, even in the lowest rank. Absolute poverty, in almost every instance, is the result of gross ignorance or habitual misconduct. It is the effect of a moral gravitation, which sinks the subject of it to the centre of the social sphere. Where there is any degree of expansion or elasticity of mind, it shews itself in an effort to rise; and there must be a concurrence of misfortunes, where the effort is unsuccessful. Let us observe real life, and we shall see the truth of this observation fully demonstrated: and what I ask, can be more reasonable, than that the elective franchise should be placed at that point of the scale of society which marks the first gradation of virtuous industry, in its progress from indigence to competency.—At that point, where first the use and value of it can be understood, or the exercise of it be advantageous;—and where it will serve, both as the stimulus to merit, and its reward. And on the other hand, what could be more absurd than to fix it lower—to force it upon those who feel not the want of it, and should not wish for it? who resign themselves without a struggle to that sordid indigence, which they every day see others, (with no greater external advantages than themselves) combat with and conquer! and who, if left to themselves, would be no more affected by the political conflicts which agitate the

higher orders of the community, than the torpid shell-fish, which slumbers out its life at the bottom of the ocean, is affected by the fluctuations of the surface.

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THOUGHTS  
ON THE BRITISH CONSTITUTION.

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No. XIII.

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APRIL 5.

“ It has always been my political sentiment, that it is unjust  
“ to attempt to hold a country in subjection, and to govern  
“ against the will and opinion of the people.”

CHARLES FOX.

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THAT extraordinary meteor in politics, THE FRENCH REVOLUTION, affords an instructive lesson.

It offers demonstrative evidence that even thrones may be insecure, though environed by armed hosts; and points out the policy of seizing on times of profound peace, to revive the principles of rational and temperate freedom. This it urges, as the surest expedient for attaching the hearts of subjects to the laws, securing the strength of their arm against invading foes, and preventing the low murmur of the people from swelling into accents of settled discontent. Though disquiets which have reason for their basis, may be silenced for a season, it is inherent in their nature to gain force by time.

To communities at large, it carries equal admonition. It shews them a point, beyond which their energies cannot be excited, without anarchy; without becoming a bar to those very securities for liberty, which render popular commotions honourable.

IN reflecting on the former state of FRANCE, a system of cruelty, monopoly, and abuse, and considering the almost miraculous change that took place ; we find an easy clue to the delight with which we contemplated the event.

IN their DECLARATION OF RIGHTS, we saw the abstract principles of government revealed, the streams of power laid open to vulgar inspection, and traced up to their source. We were led to view with rapture a new æra in human affairs ; which seem'd to promise an enjoyment of civil rights without the slightest alloy, or the smallest sacrifice of the freedom of the individual, to the comforts of regulated society.

WHEN universal liberty seemed within grasp, the prospect was suddenly obscured. The vision was too perfect to be lasting, and the enchantment held but for a day. The things we are hourly witnessing, cannot however pass away without meliorating every soil, in every portion perhaps of the globe ; for the germ of liberty will be conveyed to countries that never cultivated it before. Though the utmost sum of theoretical freedom, may not in the issue be attained ; all that experience has pronounced rational, practical, and permanent, probably will.

IT was natural that an enthusiastic love of Gallic emancipation should widely extend itself, and in no tract of country more than in *the North of Ireland* ; that nidus of American Independence, and of liberty to three millions at home. There, the most ardent affection for the late revolution displayed itself ; and what heart should have refused to participate ?

THE recital of facts will revive in our memory the odious scenes which, in the old order of things, were daily displayed in France.

BEFORE THE REVOLUTION, the lives and properties of twenty five millions, were subject without controul to the will of one man. How ill that power was and might be exercised, let the revocation of the edict of Nantz declare ; when the galleys were filled with protestants ; when five or six hundred thousand men perished in different wars ; and a like number



(because their religion was not that of Rome,) were forced out of their country, disseminating arts over Europe, many of which were before confined to France.

LETTERS de Cachet, for the Bastile and other state prisons, were sold with *blanks*, which the purchaser might fill up with names at pleasure; and at his discretion, imprisonment for life in a loathsome dungeon, or to be chained at the oar of a galley, might be the lot of the innocent as well as the guilty. Beside the great Bastile, there were thirty-five smaller ones under other names, in Paris alone.

THE liberty of the first subject in the land was at the mercy of a Madam Maintenon, or a Pompadour, or whoever else the King happened to be attached to. Latude might be confined within the walls of a dungeon for thirty five years, or a wretch bruised to death by the carriage wheels of his Majesty's mistress; without the slightest enquiry into the cause of the committal of the one, or of the death of the other. The body of an unfortunate man who happened to wound the pride of a courtesan, was "wasted away in the Bastile with long expectation and confinement. Latude felt what kind of sickness of the heart it was, which arises from hope deferred. On looking nearer, we might see him pale and feverish. In thirty years the western breeze had not once fanned his blood—he had seen no sun, no moon in all that time; nor had the voice of friend or kinsman breathed through his lattice. He was sitting upon the ground on a little straw, in the farthest corner of his dungeon, which was alternately his chair and his bed. A little calendar of small sticks were laid at the head, notched all over with the dismal days and nights he had passed there." Such was the picture of confinement, drawn by the masterly pencil of Sterne. It was a sketch from nature; and hence the effect it has ever had on the feelings of the reader. The Bastile with its towers, and its fosse, raised those fears which our countryman so well described; and which were felt by every inhabitant of a free country, that has been on the spot. The foundations of that monument of despotism, are now happily

rooted out, and grass grows where many a victim has languished from youth to old age, after the very cause of his imprisonment was forgotten, and his prosecutor no more. At its demolition, the electors of Paris found in it and carried away, (to use their own words) "the ancient arms, frightful by their strange and murderous forms; the chains, so often stained with blood; the shackles, worn down by daily rubbing on the flesh and bone of sufferers for centuries past; and the old corselet of iron, invented to retain a man by all the joints of his body, and to reduce him, like Theseus in Hell, to an eternal immobility. The Hotel de Ville is now in possession of this Chef d'Œuvre, worthy of the Furies, of Phalaris or Cacus."

LOUIS XIV. at the very moment when he was laying the foundation of a marine to curb the pride of Great Britain, could pass an edict which confined commands in their navy to persons *born gentlemen*, to the exclusion of thousands better qualified perhaps for the charge.

THE Marquis de Sillery informs us that within the present century, a General of the army (Marechal d'Estree) received an order of recall, in consequence solely of the caprice of a mistress; in the midst of seventy standards of the enemy, which he had taken possession of, after the battle of Hufteimbek.

THE TORTURE, with the rack and wheel, in short all the excruciating pains which the most ingenious and diabolical fancy could devise, were inflicted,—viz. burning the hand in the flame of brimstone; pinching the arms, thighs, and breast, with red hot irons; pouring boiling oil with melted lead and rosin into the wounds occasioned by the burning, except those on the breasts which were kindly omitted, lest the loss of life should put an end to further torments; tearing the culprit to pieces at the tails of horses, by means of ligatures upon his arms, legs and thighs, and in the close of the scene, humanely cutting the principal sinews at the joints; the pains of the wretched sufferer prolonged till he had seen a thigh and an arm torn away, when on the separation of the second

thigh death closed the scene ! Of the truth of the most minute circumstance mentioned, testimony was given in a disgraceful detail, *published by authority of the court.*

It is natural to ask in what country, age, and government, this could have happened ?—In the polished kingdom of France, in the very reign before the last, and within these thirty six years !! Damiens, who in a fit of lunacy attempted the life of Louis XV. was the object of these brutal cruelties, that were among the unhappy consequences of an unlimited monarchy, in which the sovereign was a despot, and his people slaves.

THE torture and the galleys were in disuse, and I believe suppress'd in the comparatively mild reign of Louis XVI. but that security which turns on the capricious humour of the monarch for the time being, hardly deserves the name. France was a Kingdom filled with court spies. An unguarded expression drop't in places of public resort, in censure of measures of government, or of the favourite or mistress of the King or his minister, often hurried an innocent man from his peaceful home to the deepest cavern of a state prison. Commerce, manufactures, and industry of every kind were held in contempt ; and the Janizary, under the name of a French soldier, could insult the most valuable citizen with impunity, and without the formality of a trial for the offence. Within these seven years, at Beauvais, officers were known to attack an audience in a theatre, to wound and kill as many as came within their reach ; whilst neither enquiry nor punishment was considered necessary.

WITH regard to taxation—The intendant of the taxes upon districts, parishes and individuals, could exempt such persons as he pleased to favor, or diminish the sum. The *Nobility and Clergy* were almost entirely exempted from taxes, tho' best able to pay ; and the burthen of all the other orders, particularly the poor, were of course, excessively increased.

IMMODERATE *pensions* were lavished on worthless dependants, often without the knowledge even of the King ; tho' they were paid out of the hard earned fruits of the people's labour.

THEIR Nobility consisted of *sixty thousand*. They had *one hundred thousand* privileged persons, all leagued to support their prerogative of paying no proportion of such and such imposts.—*Two hundred thousand* priests reaped, (free of expence,) one fifth of the net produce of all the territorial revenues of that great kingdom, at the same time that they were in possession of immense estates : In one half of the kingdom, tythe gave the Clergy near *a third* of the whole net revenue of the products of the earth ; a fourth or fifth in other parts.—Neckar estimated the revenue of the Clergy, at one hundred and thirty millions of Livres, of which little more than forty-two millions were received by the Rectors. Of course eighty-eight millions went to support the pride, splendour, and luxury of an enormous body of pampered prelates ; raised on the ruins of the religion of Jesus, and pretending to assimilate with the simple, pure, and unassuming system of the gospel. *Sixty thousand* persons were devoted to the monastic life. The taxes were farmed out for collection, to farmers general, with their army of assistants, amounting to *fifty thousand* more. All offices and commissions, were bought and sold ; not even excepting those of the very *magistrates* appointed to decree justice. Patents issued by the court, were bought on speculation by the rich ; in order to be sold over the Kingdom, to those who follow the callings of barbers, coal measurers, and even searchers of hog's tongues.

THE laws against game were cruel and oppressive, in a degree of which even here we have no conception : the sportsman who dared to kill it, in certain districts, was sent to the Gallies ! Their game comprehended wild boars, and herds of deer, not confined to any wall or pale. When the lady of the *Seigneur* chanced to lie in, the tenantry were bound to beat the waters, to keep the frogs silent. Weeding and hoeing the lands were often prohibited, lest the young partridges should be disturbed, and the farmer not suffered by law to use certain manures, tho' best calculated for his grounds ; because they affected the flavour of the game. At the *Seigneur's* presses, if he required it, must the farmer's grapes be pressed, and his oven must receive his bread ; in order to furnish a pretext for a tax. All the feudal servitude of the dark ages was rigidly exacted : hence

the destruction of some *Chateaux* early in the revolution ; but still easier is that to be accounted for by the injustice which prevailed in the Seigneur's courts of law.\*

THE penal code bore no proportion to the nature of crimes; ex. gr. Smugglers of salt,—arm'd, and assembled to the number of five, were in Provence, liable to a fine of five hundred livres and nine years of the galleys ; in other parts of the Kingdom they suffered death. Add to these the oppression of their *Gabelles* and *Corvée*, grievous and impolitic in the extreme. Juries, or any thing that deserved the name of fair trial, were unknown, and when a feeble spark of liberty discovered itself in their Parliaments, the banishment of their members was the consequence, even in the reign of Louis the XVI.

LET who will, fill up the rest of the picture. Enough has been done to vindicate those who had and have virtue sufficient to abhor such slavery wherever found, and to rejoice in every prospect of human beings restored to their natural rights. As to the anarchy, misrule and cruelty at present prevalent in France, he would be hardy indeed who should become their advocate. They have arisen from the excess of a virtuous passion, driven to a sad extreme by the weakness, perhaps perfidy, of an unhappy monarch. Forgetting the crimes of a French mob, the magnanimous determination of the French nation in the several provinces of her widely extended domains, no longer to groan under servitude, demanded our admiration ; their errors now claim our pity.

Does any man that seriously reflects on these things, wish for a revival of such complicated plans of slavery and degradation?—If there be, let him not call himself christian ; for religion teaches us to love one another, and to consider the human race as one family, under the government of the same God.—Does any one who lives in a free country, wish for it? His country may be free, but it is not in the nature of things that he can be so himself ; for in his heart he is a slave.

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\* See a late tour through France.



WHAT FRANCE WAS—ENGLAND and IRELAND—may be. How is such a state to be retarded, and the sacred spark of liberty, longest preserved?—By having before our eyes the fall of the ancient Gallic Constitution, the democracy of which was once stronger than our own.—By watching the views of ambitious men, and taking every fair opportunity of bringing our own constitution back to its *first principles*. Tho' this is to be done with a deliberate hand, no difficulty should alarm us, nor cause it to be neglected.

WITH respect to our own country, the imperfect state of parliamentary representation, and the gradual inroads of power, upon the best and most ancient mounds of the constitution, may have produced in some of the chastest breasts, a momentary admiration of forms of government more pleasing to the eye than our own, but not less subject to abuse, nor less grievous in their decay.

GENERAL Assemblies of the people have, however, in all quarters, reprobated republican ideas, by DECLARATIONS energetic and strong, in exact ratio with the magnitude and respectability of the meeting. From the commons collected in a Barony or County, to one million four hundred thousand inhabitants represented in a province, at *Dungannon*, expressions of unbounded affection for their Prince, and of love for their constitution in its true principles, have risen in such a climax of loyalty, as to leave the enemies of reform without one solitary pretext for avoiding a fair discussion of the grievances of the subject. But it is not the power of *the Crown* of which good men complain, tho' the venerated name of Majesty is in every interested man's mouth. It is the encreased, encreasing, and undue power of the *Aristocracy*, which in progress of time may destroy the Regal Branch itself.

IT has been the chief design of these THOUGHTS to turn public attention to *the theory* of the British constitution, and to some of its most ancient *principles*, as points for shaping such a course as may avoid the rocks surrounding unlimited Monarchy, and democratical Tyranny; and lead to that happier mean which lies between both.

DOES GREAT BRITAIN OR IRELAND FULLY ENJOY THAT CONSTITUTION which these papers hold up as a pattern of unrivalled excellence ?

THE following Questions will determine.

I. ARE the laws affecting life, person, and property, framed with the consent of the King—the Lords—and the commons; the last fully and fairly represented in a third branch of the Legislature ? [ General suffrage of all freemen present, the ancient practice ; confirmed by statute 7th, Henry IV.—but restricted to 40s. freeholders by 8th Henry VI —[See Note.\*]

II. ARE Elections of Members of Parliament FREE ? [*Bill of Rights.*]

III. CAN no man be imprisoned without previous cause shewn ? [*Petition of Rights*, (Charles I.)]

IV. CAN a subject except in particular cases which the law has long declared) insist on the benefit of a Habeas Corpus ; and must a jailor produce in court the body of his prisoner, and shew cause for his detainer ? [*Habeas Corpus*, Chas. II.]

V. CAN the meanest subject be brought to trial only when lawful evidence is given against him ? (*Magna Charta*, chap. 47, John.)

VI. MUST every alleged crime be tried by a Jury, consisting of the Peers of the accused, resident in the vicinage ?—(*Magna Charta*, chap. 48.)

VII. Is it impossible, from the nature of the law respecting Juries, that they can be unduly impannelled, or packed, in any case whatsoever ?

\* The reader cannot imagine that *universal* suffrage, is recommended by this reference to ancient practice ; as the opinion of the author was explained on that point in number eleven.

VIII. CAN excessive fines (disproportioned to the offence, or to the ability of the person to pay them) never be exacted? (*Magna Charta.*)

IX. CAN no power in the State exact excessive bail?—(*Bill of Rights.*)

X. Is a man's house still his *castle*—tho' "a straw built shed," and tho' "every wind of Heaven may whistle round it, and all the elements of nature enter in."? (Lord Chat-ham, and the antient practice of the constitution, prior to excise and certain other laws.)

XI. CAN neither the Crown, nor its servants, sell, deny, or defer right and justice to *any* man? (*Magna Charta.*)

If these are already enjoyed; if the benefits of the great Charter, of the Petition of Rights, of the Bill of Rights, and the several guards of our liberties confirmed at the Revolution, are still in undiminished force, let every man sit down contented under his vine, happy in the reflection that his country is free. But if they are not; the talents of the wise and the hearts of all, should be engaged in their attainment—because the points enumerated are essential to the British constitution. No abuse in the practice of that constitution, can however be charged to the principle; We may lament and strive to remove the one, but we should never cease to venerate the other.

In no possible situation should the people of this or any country, or age, be tempted to despair.—When the cup is even ready to overflow, comfort is at hand. It is one of the means of Providence, for preserving a balance in human affairs, that the very enormity of an evil shall contribute to its cure:

THOUGHTS  
ON THE BRITISH CONSTITUTION.

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No. XIV.

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AUGUST 13.

“ THE total difuse of arms amongst the lower classes of people, laid that opulent country (Carthage) open; an easy and a tempting prey to every invader. This was another capital error, and consequently another cause which contributed to their ruin. How must any nation, like our own, (*England*) which with respect to the bulk of the people, lies in the same defenceless situation; how, I say, must they censure the mighty State of Carthage, spreading terror and giving law to the most distant nations by her powerful fleets, when they see her at the same time trembling and giving herself up for lost, at the landing of any invader in her own territories?”

MONTAGUE; ANCIENT REPUBLICS.

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It is a principle of the British constitution, that every freeman should be armed. This is equally his right, and his duty. It is a privilege which tends to secure the possession of every other, against both foreign enemies and domestic tyrants: and he is therefore under an obligation to exercise a right of so much consequence to Society.

This principle has been handed down to us from the remotest antiquity. Notwithstanding the unconstitutional tyranny of game laws, and the restrictions imposed on *Roman Catholics* in times of jealousy and dissention, it is at this moment exercised in an eminent degree: and it is to be hoped that the people of this country will never suffer their right to be infringed.

THE practice of carrying arms, must necessarily rank among the first, in point of time, that obtained in every civil society :—but we know, in particular, that it was an essential duty in feudal times. It was even the condition upon which both Lords and Commons held their lands. Hence, their titles to their property, were called Military Tenures.

So thoroughly was this principle established, when the Barons extorted Magna Charta from John in 1215, that it was thought unnecessary to mention it among their privileges. That it was the duty of the people, was plain to every one ; for they not only held their estates by military tenure, but were frequently called into the field by their respective chiefs. That it was their right, could not be doubted at Runnemede, where the Barons, with their tenants were encamped in defiance of the King.

It is unnecessary to seek for proofs of this practice in the four succeeding centuries, because the same system continued ; and previously to the establishment of standing armies, wars were carried on by the proprietors of land.

WHEN the establishment of standing armies had rendered the people remiss in performing this duty to their country ; and justly excited the jealousy of Parliament—it was thought necessary to remind the King of the rights of his people, and to remind the people of their duty. We accordingly find articles to the following purport in the BILL OF RIGHTS, 1689—

—THAT the raising or keeping a standing army within the kingdom, in time of peace, unless it be with the consent of parliament, is against law.

—THAT the subjects which are Protestants, may have arms for their defence, suitable to their condition, and as allowed by law.

THE distracted state of this kingdom induced the government, at several periods, to enforce the obligation of bearing arms upon the English and Scotch settlers, under heavy penalties ;—and in the *City of Dublin* in particular, the oath of a



freeman binds him, at this day, to be furnished with such armour and weapons as were in use when the oath was framed.

THAT this liberty of having arms implied the liberty of ARRAYING and EXERCISING IN BODIES, is evident even from such considerations as these :—THAT if a man be allowed to have arms, he must be permitted to learn their use ; otherwise the permission would be nugatory : THAT if two or more citizens be attacked, the law must necessarily authorize them to co-operate for their mutual defence : THAT if a neighbourhood, or town, be exposed to danger, the inhabitants must unite, and learn to act together, or their arms would be useless ; and a few riotous persons, or a banditti, might pillage each house separately, and murder the family without interruption : THAT if the country be threatened by foreign or internal enemies, the people must act in concert, and take the most effectual method of making resistance. AND THAT this cannot be done without providing uniform arms, and accoutrements, nor without being regularly disciplined and commanded.

BUT beside these general considerations, we are supported in this opinion by the constitutional facts already mentioned. For, 1st. Perhaps a principal motive to the formation of societies, was reciprocal defence and co-operation. 2d. In military times, the people were bound by their leases, to embody, when the kingdom was in danger either from abroad or at home. 3d. The armour and weapons with which the freemen of cities were required to be furnished, would have been of little use, except in battle array. And 4th. THE BILL OF RIGHTS could not mean to leave any doubt of the constitutional conduct of its authors, who had recently exercised this right in effecting *the Revolution*.

IF any person should still hesitate upon this point, his mind must be fully convinced by what has passed in our own times : for we have seen this principle of common law declared in the most solemn and deliberate manner. We have seen both houses of parliament returning thanks to numerous bodies of citizens, regularly armed, disciplined and embodied, without

receiving pay or any other aid, or acknowledging any military subjection to the executive power. Nay his Majesty himself intimated his concurrence with the Lords and Commons, by receiving a deputation from the Volunteers of Ireland.

It is incontrovertible, that the recent improvement made in the constitution of Ireland, and the extension of her trade, as well as her security from *invasion* during the American war, are to be ascribed to the discipline of the Volunteers, and to the formidable bodies which learned to act together at Reviews: for had every individual stood alone, the people would have been only the more despised on account of their simplicity, in providing themselves with arms which they were incapable of using. The approbation of his Majesty and the two Houses, was not therefore conferred upon them as individuals; for as unconnected individuals, they could not have effected any of the purposes for which they received this approbation. It was given to them as an army, which had equipped itself for actual service, without requiring any assistance from government.

STILL, perhaps, some timorous persons may be prevented from yielding to the force of these arguments, by their fears. They may think that government could not be carried on, if all the people were armed. In my opinion, this is the very circumstance which renders the Volunteer associations all-powerful in *acting right*, and impotent in acting wrong. If indeed only a certain description of the people were armed, they must become formidable both to government, and their fellow-citizens. But when the Volunteers and the people are in fact the same body, it is plain that the people have nothing to fear, and it is equally evident that government is safe from being over-ruled by a faction. If indeed a whole nation in arms, should concur in demanding a redress of grievances, and an administration should refuse to comply; it might then tremble; and who is there that would have it otherwise? Were all the people on one side and their servants on the other; the people would command, and their servants must obey. But in the regular course of affairs, when government studies the interest of the nation, the nation being

armed will take care that they shall meet with no obstruction in the discharge of their duty ; no petty insurrection will dare to shew its head ; no formidable rebellion, to raise its crest.

It is the interest of every well meaning government, that our military associations should flourish even in time of peace ; but on the eve of a war, it would be madness or treason to discourage them. Administration should then solicit their assistance, for they are the only force which can protect the country, by land. How could IRELAND be protected from a *French invasion* by 12,000 men, effectives and non-effectives, cantoned throughout the kingdom ; a great part of them necessary for garrison duty, and for the execution of the laws ! SHE MUST THEN DEPEND UPON THE VOLUNTEER ARMY ; inexhaustible in point of numbers, quartered in every parish, intimately acquainted with the country, and equally interested and intrepid in the defence of their liberties.

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\* \* The following Extracts are made from Irish acts of Edward the Fourth, rather as matter of curiosity, than as connected with this publication.

STATUTE V. OF ED. IV. CHAP. IV.

An act that every Englishman, and Irishman, that dwelleth with Englishmen, between sixty and sixteen in years, shall have an English bow and arrows.

Rot. Par. Cap 17.

ITEM. At the request of the Commons that consideration had to the great number of Irishmen, that exceed greatly the English people, that in force and augmentation of the King's lieges, it is ordeyned by the same parliament that every Englishman and Irishman that dwell with Englishmen and speak English, that be between sixty and sixteen in age, shall have an English bow of his own length, and one fist meal at the least betwixt the necks, with twelve shafts of the length of three-fourths of the standard ; the bows of yew, wych, hassel, ash, awburn, or any other reasonable tree, according to their power, and the shafts in the same manner, within two months next after the publication of the estatute, upon pain

of two pence a moneth, from moneth to other, for that he shall have and continue the bow and shafts, and in lieu of the bow and shafts broken and lost to have new under pane of two-pence every moneth till it be done, and yet not prohibiting gentlemen on horseback to ride according to their best dispositions, to ride with spear, so that they have bows with their men for time of necessity.

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CHAP. V.

An act for having a constable in every town, and a pair of butts for shooting, and that every man betwixt sixty and sixteen shall shoot every holyday at the same butts.

Rot. Par. Cap. 18.

At the request of the Commons it is ordayned and established by authority of said Parliament, that in every English town of this land that pass three houses holden by tenants, where no other president is, be chosen by his neighbours, or by the Lord of the same town, one constable to be president and governor of the same town in all things that pertain to the common rules of the same town, as in ordinance of night-watch, from Michaelmas to Easter, yearly, under pain of three-pence every night; and also to ordayne one pair of butts for shooting within the town, or well neere, upon cost and labour of the said town, under pane of two shillings from one moneth to the other, from the publication hereof till the constable be made, and the butts also, and that every man in the same town in such hour as the constable, or his deputy of his neighbours shall assign, that is, between sixty and sixteen, must be before the constable, or his deputy, at the same butts, and shoot up and down three times every feast day betwixt the first day of March and the last day of July, under pane of *one half-penny* for every day, and that all these panes be levied off their goods or wages from moneth to moneth by the constable, to be spent in the strengthening of the same town, or otherwise in his default to be levied by the wardein of the place, and that the panes lost be spent upon the towns when the said panes riseth.

THOUGHTS  
ON THE BRITISH CONSTITUTION.

—  
No. XV.  
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APRIL 12.

“ THE Democracies in this quarter of the world are inconfi-  
derable in power ; but, if that tumultuary form of Go-  
vernment should be re-established in great States, and  
popular Assemblies again entrusted with executive func-  
tions, ought not the principles established in this discourse  
to convince us that such assemblies would abuse power  
not, as grossly as they did formerly ? Is it not to be  
dreaded that the ancient barbarities would be renewed,  
the manners of men again tainted with a savage ferocity,  
and those enormities, the bare description of which is  
shocking to human nature, be introduced, repeated,  
and gradually become familiar ?”

GILLIS'S LIFE OF LYSIAS AND ISOCRATES.

THE British Constitution has been sometimes compared with NEW OR IMAGINARY Republics.—It may not therefore be inexpedient to compare it with those Republican Forms of Government which we know to be ancient, and to have been reduced to practice. A complete contrast would indeed be impracticable in the space and time allotted to publications of this kind. All that can be aimed at is to suggest a few hints, which may induce my readers to prosecute the same train of thoughts.

FROM the pacific declarations of the French Republic, tho' not yet verified by experience, it has been concluded that if all European States adopted the Republican Form, wars would cease—and the frequency of hostilities among modern



nations has been ascribed to their Monarchical Governments.— How such an idea should enter the head of any man who had ever read history, is to me altogether unaccountable; for every one knows that SPARTA, ATHENS, and above all, ROME, were the most restless, ambitious, and warlike states even of ancient times; and that there is not one modern nation that can stand in competition with them in this respect. It is not necessary, however, to seek for examples beyond GREECE; for the ancient state of that country is a case in point. Were *Europe* covered with Republics, she would be a second Greece, on a larger scale; and the incessant and desperate contests which were supported by those ancient states, would be renewed; with this difference, that hostilities would last longer, and be more destructive. The Commonwealth of England was scarcely formed, when it engaged in a desperate war with the *Republic* of Holland: and the Cantons of Switzerland have supplied every state in Europe with troops. Republics therefore are fond of war. Nor should this propensity appear strange to any one; for the cause of it is very obvious.

IN BRITAIN, where the prerogative of war and peace is vested in the King, we know that though an inglorious peace may sometimes be concluded, and an imprudent war declared, there are many obstacles in the way of both the one and the other. A regard to the sense of the public, and particularly of the two houses, is even at this day a powerful restraint, as we have repeatedly experienced within a few years, particularly in the *Russian* armament: and as neither the King, nor his principal advisers, are military men, the mad passion for *military glory* can have little influence.

BUT in Republics, it is easy to enflame the resentment, the avarice, or the ambition of a popular assembly; and there is always a number of demagogues and desperate swordsmen, whose passion is fame, and whose interest is best promoted by public confusion and foreign wars.

Now if wars would continue under Republican forms, it is plain that they could not be carried on without *standing*

*armies.* Some of the ancient Republics were military communities. The Citizens were not only soldiers, but they were nothing else. ROME and SPARTA were *garrisons*; from which drafts and detachments might be made without any material change in their mode of living; nay sometimes, actual service was esteemed a relaxation from duty, and a lucrative employment. But in the tranquil, commercial state of modern Europe, the inhabitants would scarcely brook to be ordered into camp, and would think it a strange commencement of Liberty and Equality, to be transported for seven years to *Gibraltar, Africa, or the East Indies.*

STANDING armies therefore would *still* be necessary: and a little reflection will convince any man that they are more formidable in Republics than in Monarchies. ROME, it is well known, was frequently overrun, and at length destroyed, even by an army of her own children. Her rival CARTHAGE, which like *England* was a commercial state, and found it cheaper and easier to *buy* soldiers, than to fight her own battles, was brought to the brink of destruction by an army of foreign mercenaries — In the time of CROMWELL, the English Commonwealth was governed by a *council of officers*; and soon after, the army of the Commonwealth restored Charles II. without condition or stipulation. The long Parliament was as able and virtuous a body of men as ever sat in any Senate: yet the result of their efforts, was military tyranny and Cromwellian usurpation; rendered hereditary in the person of Richard Cromwell, and suppressed only to make way for the profligate and licentious Charles.

From these facts it will also appear that European Republics cannot be exempt from TAXES. A popular Government may no doubt be conducted at less expence than a Monarchy; but when a National Assembly, a standing army, a powerful navy, and frequent wars are to be supported, in addition to the ordinary expences of Government,—the people must be subject to heavy imposts. America indeed is happy in this respect; but it is owing to her remote situation. Yet even America, though without army, or navy, is subject to many taxes, particularly a heavy Excise, which even now is exciting discontent.

As I have shewn, that a *modern Republic* would probably be a *warlike state*, and consequently liable to the despotism of a standing army, and subject to grievous taxes ; so it might be easily shewn that it would be less able to bear these burdens than such a kingdom as England : for *commerce* is not congenial with a Republican Government.

THE stability of a Republic depends on a considerable degree of equality among the citizens, in point of property. This can be maintained only by discouraging commerce ; by Agrarian Laws ; by violating the right of a man to bequeath his property ; or by similar contrivances, which have actually been recommended by some popular writers. A state in which such a disparity of wealth exists as is to be found at present in England, could not long continue under a Republican Government : and this disparity would soon take place in a free commercial country. It is probable, then, that extensive and prosperous commerce would be fatal to a Republic. Now, we all know, that in England, on the contrary, Commerce was the parent and nurse of liberty.

It has been already observed, that democratical Governments are peculiarly exposed to the storms of *FACTION*. " Of all the states of Greece," says Montague, " Athens" which was the head of the democratical confederacy " may be most strictly termed the seat of faction." But they are subject to a greater evil than this—I mean the effects of foreign intrigues and bribery. It is the nature of democratical Republics to be influenced by men of popular talents, who are often in indigent circumstances. A very small sum may be a great object to one of these Demagogues : and his friendship may be of immense value to a state which is carrying on war, or negotiating with his country. To expect that such temptations will be resisted, or to imagine that a popular assembly may not be deluded by an artful leader, is to declare profound ignorance both of modern and ancient times.

This is the side in which *FRANCE* will be most easily wounded ; and if her government continue in its present form, it

is probable she may, in time, fall a victim to foreign influence, and domestic treachery; for every European state may have agents in her assembly, who will either sacrifice her interests to their employers, or occasion such general distrust in the nation, that they will be hurried into some desperate expedient as a cure for their distractions—as actually happened in *England* at the RESTORATION.

THOSE who have most strenuously objected to any arguments drawn from *the Theory* of the British Constitution, have very inconsistently argued from *abstract* democratical notions, that have never been put in execution. In this paper I have set aside both THEORIES, and appealed to EXPERIENCE. From experience it has appeared, that an European Republic would naturally be restless, factious, ambitious, and exposed to frequent destructive wars; that these must be conducted by standing armies and navies; that these will require high taxes in addition to those which are necessary for the internal government; that without commerce, it will be unable to support such burdens; and *with it*, the people will soon become, by inequality of property, unfit for a democratical constitution: and finally, that beside the consequences of intestine divisions, its interests will be continually BETRAYED TO ITS ENEMIES.

THOUGHTS  
ON THE BRITISH CONSTITUTION.

No. XVI.

APRIL 30.—

“ THAT people (the Athenians) highly susceptible, as they  
“ are, of lively and transient sensations, stand distinguished  
“ beyond all other nations, for uniting the most discord-  
“ dant qualities, and such as may be most easily abused to  
“ mislead them.”

ANACHARSIS.

It is very observable that the writers who lately acquired the greatest ascendancy over the public mind, drew nothing from HISTORY. This must have been occasioned either by ignorance, by a desire of imposing on their readers, or by an opinion that we are not only wiser than all our predecessors, but so well acquainted with the principles of politics, that we cannot derive any benefit from their wisdom, or experience. Ignorance or imposture, it would be uncivil to impute: nor can we charge them with such self-sufficiency and presumption as are implied by the last supposition, without suspecting them of the greatest absurdity—for every wise man knows that he may receive advantage from a knowledge of the successs, the misfortunes, and the observations even of a weak one. Yet, upon this idea, seems to be founded that common notion, so favourable to indolence and ignorance, that A NEW *ÆRA* has commenced, that Governments are in future to be constituted upon maxims entirely new, and that the facts recorded in History cannot apply to Constitutions which bear no resemblance to ancient forms of Government.

It is said in particular, that a Legislature PURELY REPRESENTATIVE, is a modern invention, and of course that none of the observations drawn from the *old* Republics are applicable to it. If this plan were indeed so recent as it is said



to be, it would be very liable to suspicion, for it would come under the description of an experiment; and people would naturally prefer a government which had, for a great length of time stood the test of experience, to a mere novelty.

BUT in fact it is not a novelty. Representation has had a share in many Constitutions: and there is in ancient history an instance of a pure representative democratical Republic, which is nearly the counterpart of the plan lately submitted to *the French*.—This Republic is *ATHENS*, from which many of the observations in former numbers of these thoughts have been drawn.

SINCE the political system lately introduced into France is considered by many as a new discovery, it may not be unreasonable to point out the particulars in which it resembles the Grecian policy: and since it is looked upon as a contrast to the imperfect form of Government established in *ENGLAND*, it cannot be irrelevant to the intention of this publication, to state the effects produced by this plan upon a people who have always been thought to bear a remarkable resemblance to the French. It is obvious that upon such extensive subjects, a few hints must suffice. A full discussion would fill a volume, and might laudably employ the pen of some eminent scholar and politician.

IN *ATTICA* as in *FRANCE*, the Sovereignty resided in the people; who claimed and exercised the right of acting in their collective capacity, as often as they thought proper. But as the administration of public affairs could not be conducted by so numerous a body, they vested the powers of Government, in ordinary cases, in a Senate. In Athens however, the interference of the people was much more frequent than in France, in consequence of the very confined limits of its territory.

THE people, that they might perform the functions which they reserved to themselves, were divided into certain districts, called *DEMOI*. Of these there were in Attica 174. They may be compared to the *Communes* or *Sections* in France.

EACH Section was under the direction of a set of Officers, called REMARCHS. It was their business to assemble the inhabitants on public occasions; to keep a registry of the Citizens resident in the district; to preside at the election of Senators and Magistrates, &c. In all these respects they bore an exact resemblance to the *Bureau de l'assemblée primaire*.

AT these elections in both countries, the poorest citizens were capable of electing, and being elected; except they had been precluded by conviction of certain crimes. The meanest citizens were eligible to the highest offices: and foreigners when naturalized, had all the privileges of citizens. In the admission of new citizens, however, the Athenians were stricter than the French. The electors of course were more select in Attica than in France, even after the time of ARISTIDES, who extended the privileges of the lower orders; and the candidates were subject to a severe scrutiny, before they could be proposed.

THE Districts of Attica were classed under *ten tribes*, answering to the *Departments* of France; each of which appointed fifty representatives to the Senate. The members for each tribe, formed a committee, and every committee in its turn presided for 35 days over the affairs of the State, during which time it was called the PRYTANY. Ten deputies of the committee constituted a *sub-committee*, who were stiled PROEDRI, held their office for a week, and seem to answer to the French *Executive Council*. One of their number presided every day; and was also president, or EPISTATES of the Senate.

THIS Senate, like the *Legislative Assembly*, exercised a considerable share of the executive Government.—It's members must have attained the age of thirty years, previous to election. They sat every day; and to guard against vacancies, the people in the *Primary Assemblies* appointed EPILACHONS, or *Suppleans*, as substitutes for those who might die or be expelled.

THE SENATE, like the *Legislative Assembly*, was elected annually; and the deputies received daily wages. It might make decrees, which continued in force for a year; and in

ordinary cases, it had a previous negative on the deliberations of the people, but its more important acts were submitted to the General Assembly for sanction; as the French *Assembly* refers matters of singular moment to the *departments*.—Upon this part of *solon's* plan, the Scythian philosopher shrewdly observed—that in Athens *wise* men were to deliberate, and *fools* to decide.

THE free citizens of Athens were not as numerous in proportion to the rest of the inhabitants as those of France, but they were more fully represented; for beside their personal attendance in the Assembly of the people, there was a representative for every forty citizens.

LASTLY, the same distinction took place between *decrees* and laws, in each state.—“ A *law* is distinguished by its universality and its indefinite duration. A *decree* is confined to a certain district, particular individuals, or a limited period of time.”—[French Constitution—Tit. VIII. § II. 4.]

ALL magistrates, and other public officers, were chosen annually as in France, by open suffrage, ballot, or lot. The last mode of deciding among the candidates, was very common; and probably arose from long experience of the caprice or corruption of the multitude.

SOME of these, after having discharged the highest offices in the state, with unquestionable wisdom and integrity, were admitted into the court of *AREOPAGUS*, for life.

OTHER magistrates presided as judges in different courts, while they were in office.

ALL judges therefore were *elective* as in France; and like the French ones were assisted by *JURIES*.

THE jurors were very numerous, often 500; and on some occasions, even *six thousand*; and received compensation for their attendance.

SOME of the judges went circuit, and resembled *Les Gensseurs Judiciaires*.

SHOULD the parties choose to decide their difference by arbitration, their right to do so is expressly ascertained in both constitutions.

THE EUTHUNI of Athens corresponded with *le Bureau de Comptabilité*, or commissioners of accounts in France.

THESE are some of the principal points in which those two forms of government coincided. It would be easy to mention others in which they differed, and in which the Athenians had the advantage—according to the modern system of politics.

THUS the mass of the people more frequently acted *in person*. The representation was more complete.—The EPISTATES, or president of the Senate, and principal officer of state, held his office but *one day*, and could not be chosen a second time.

THERE is another circumstance in which the Greeks were superior—"It is a great advantage," says an enlightened French author, "that the nature of the Democracy (Athens) rendered delays and enquiries necessary, in matters of legislation:" but he subjoins an observation equally applicable to both—"it is often a great misfortune that they are no less unavoidable on occasions that call for celerity and dispatch."—Barthelemi. *Le peuple a toujours trop d'action, ou trop peu. Quelquefois, avec cent mille bras, il renverse tout; quelquefois avec cent mille pieds il ne va que comme les insectes. Montesquieu, Esprit de Loix Liv. II. ch. 2.*—The people have always either too much activity, or too little. Sometimes, with an hundred thousand arms, they overturn every thing; sometimes with an hundred thousand feet, they crawl like insects.

THESE remarks will satisfy the reader, that *the French constitution is not a singular phenomenon*. Now if this plan was formerly carried into execution—the next question that arises is, HOW DID IT OPERATE?—From its past operation, we may form conjectures concerning its future effects. The result of a second trial may be more or less favourable than the first,

in a certain degree, according to the character and situation of the people upon whom it is made : but while mankind continues the same species, the events of similar experiments cannot essentially differ.

ATTICA, as well as France, was originally under a kingly government. It adopted the republican form, for a very whimsical reason. CODRUS, their last King, was so good, that they determined never to have another.

THE constitution of Athens was scarcely formed, when PISISTRATUS, by his popular talents, obtained an absolute ascendancy over the people, and left his sons in possession of the supreme power.

THOUGH they were dispossessed by a second Revolution, the history of Athens is, in a great measure, a history of demagogues, who successively exercised all the powers and commanded the treasures of the state ; as the history of an absolute monarchy is little more than an account of its Kings. Some of these were men of transcendant abilities and virtues : but others were distinguished only by a profligate audacity. CLEON and ALCIBIADES, were equally powerful, with THEMISTOCLES and ARISTIDES.

SOME of these great men were injuriously suspected of being subservient to foreign powers, and others of a class inferior in talents, tho' not in influence, we know to have been *bribed*.

BETWEEN a mean distrust of the best citizens, and a blind confidence in base declaimers, the state was incessantly distracted by hostile factions. This spirit of jealousy at length arose to such a height, that no citizen of superior merit could live in Athens. " It is the common fault of great and " free states, that envy is the concomitant of glory ; and that " the multitude have a pleasure in humbling all who rise " above their own level. The poor can never bear to be " spectators of opulence. Chabrias, therefore, absented " himself as much as possible from Athens : and not " only he, but all the most eminent men did the same,



“ knowing that to be free from envy, they must abandon  
 “ their country. Thus Conon lived in Cyprus; Iphicrates,  
 “ in Thrace; Timotheus, in Lesbos; Chabrias, at Sigæum.”  
 —Nepos in Chab :—

SALLUST tells us that ingratitude is a *virtue* in a Republic, and that it is reckoned much better to forget a kindness than an injury; to neglect a benefactor, than pardon a criminal. “ In republicâ multo præstat beneficii, quam maleficii, immemorem esse. Bonus tantummodo segnior fit, ubi negligas, at malus improbior. Ad hoc, si injuriæ non sint, haud sepe auxilii egeas.”

It is not uncommon for democratical states to wreak their vengeance on unfortunate, though meritorious commanders : but the Athenians carried this, like every other feature of their republican character, to the most enormous excess, when they executed the six Admirals who had gained the glorious victory of *Arginusæ*; for a neglect, falsely imputed to them, of collecting the bodies of the dead for burial. Some symptoms of the same envious and ungrateful spirit appear in the world, even at this day. In Latin, public odium and envy are expressed by the same word, *Invidia*.

IN Athens as in Rome, the only cure that the popular leaders could devise for these disorders, was a series of ruinous wars, chiefly with *Republiis*. The Peloponessian lasted for twenty six campaigns.

DURING these wars, the people seemed to change their character. They gloried in being the only people who had erected an *Altar to Mercy*, yet their victories were often stained with almost unexampled avarice and cruelty. They doomed to destruction those *free cities* which had resisted them in a war of iniquitous revenue; and of their operations against aristocratical Republics, we have this summary and memorable account given by Montague—“ Where the Athenians were victors, democracy was settled, or restored; “ and the people glutted their revenge with the blood of the “ nobility !”

THEY themselves fell twice under the despotic power of their own citizens. The first faction was composed of four hundred; the last of thirty; supported by a hostile state, and known by the name of the *Thirty Tyrants*.

As to their internal management, their popular assembly was a scene of faction, clamour, confusion and inconsistency. When it lost the charm of novelty, the attendance of the people was to be obtained only by a pecuniary allowance. By this expedient all the necessitous and profligate were drawn together: the best citizens despised both the company and the temptation. This expedient however was so necessary, that the comic and satirical poet ARISTOPHANES, praising Plutus, the God of riches, asks,

Εκκλησια δ' ὅχι δια τῶτον γίγνεται;

Is it not he that constitutes our assembly?

JURIES were collected by the same mercenary means, and we may guess how they were composed.

At length when public and private virtue was completely undermined; when plays and shews become the occupation of the people; when RHODION and other master spirits despaired of the national morals; when a band of orators, in the pay of foreign powers, assumed the direction of the people,—they fell at a single blow, under the dominion of PHILIP. By their conduct for several generations after, they shewed that they were as incapable of submitting to slavery, as of enjoying liberty.

WHETHER the *French Republic* will run the same course, posterity will decide. Whether it has begun it, is a point of which we may judge. Whether or not such a government is preferable to that of England, every one will determine for himself. Whether it is adapted to extensive dominions, has been declared by Montesquieu. “ Il est de la nature d’une Republique, qu’elle n’ait qu’un petit territoire : sans cela elle ne peut guère subsister. Dans un grand Republique, il y a de grandes fortunes, et par consequent peu de moderati-

“ on dans les esprits : il y a trop grands despots a mettre entre les mains d'un citoyen.”—It is essential to a republic to have a confined territory. Without this it cannot long exist. In an extensive Republic there must be large properties, consequently little moderation; and the public trusts will be too great to be lodged in the hands of a citizen.

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OCTOBER 30. 1793.

THAT the French Statesmen and Philosophers have taken Athens for their model, may be further presumed from their division of time. The Athenian months were divided into decads: the days were named according to their order in each decad: and the last day of the month was also called after Demetrius Poliorcetes, a benefactor of their State. The months took their names from their festivals, in honour of certain remarkable events and celebrated heroes, by which each of them was distinguished. In both countries, time was divided into periods of four years. In both, these periods were denominated olympiads; and as each olympiad among the Greeks was concluded by the olympic games, so the French are to close their olympiads with civic games.

THOUGHTS

ON THE BRITISH CONSTITUTION.

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No. XVII.

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OCTOBER 30.

AUT me amor negotii suscepti fallit, aut nulla unquam  
" Respublica nec major, nec sanctior, nec bonis exemplis  
" ditior fuit."

LIV :

" I am either deceived by a partiality for my subject, or  
" there never was a Commonwealth, greater, more  
" venerable, or richer in noble examples."

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THE plan of this publication requires several additional papers, but the time of the writers will only admit of a few. The business of these concluding essays shall therefore be to point out two of those subjects which have not yet come under discussion, though of great importance and worthy of a distinct and copious elucidation.

THE first is the admirable principles of the COMMON LAW, and the practice of our CRIMINAL JURISPRUDENCE. A just delineation of these subjects would give the inhabitants of this country a much more exalted idea of its constitution than they now entertain, when the generality of them are naturally prone and sedulously taught to dwell on minute blemishes or unavoidable inconveniences : and it would at the same time form a striking contrast with the crudities of modern systems. It could not fail to give an Irishman of humble condition a lively sensation of both pleasure and pride, to compare the process and the evidence necessary to his conviction and punishment, with that which in France decides the fate of a General or a King.

THE other point, on which it would be desirable to see a copious publication is this : that the British constitution not only possesses a distinguished advantage in its susceptibility

of improvement, but has actually been progressive from the conquest. Though the illustration of this assertion might seem an arduous and even an absurd attempt to the majority of the people, yet to any one conversant with history the fact would be plain and the proof easy. Perhaps it would appear, on such an enquiry, impossible to select a period of fifty years in the history of England, since the constitution assumed a regular form, in which it has not gained additional strength; though possibly no one year could be named, in which the whole people, or a very great proportion of them, did not think it was suffering dilapidation and falling to decay. Nay more, this strange propensity contributes more than any thing else to the stability of that constitution, the ruin of which they are continually deploring. The reason of this discontented temper is, that men are not only more sensible of grievances than of privileges; but an innovation is generally of a more glaring nature, and excites more attention, than an additional security to liberty. An extension of freedom, is no more than their right: a limitation of it, is both an injury and an insult. That this jealousy will tend to secure the inviolability of the beloved object requires no illustration.

THOUGH all the facts that might be adduced to establish this point cannot be brought forward in a paper of this kind, I shall mention a few of them.—By William the Conqueror, who reigned in the latter end of the eleventh century, the Saxon constitution was abolished, the feudal system introduced, and the natives enslaved. Beginning from this period I assert, that the Saxon laws gradually revived, and the constitution gained strength. The twelfth century opened with the charter of Henry I. and was distinguished by that of Stephen, by the constitutions of Clarendon, by the revival of the laws of Edward the confessor, and by that signal improvement in liberty and law, the institution of circuits. The thirteenth century was signalized by Magna Charta, extorted from John and confirmed by Henry II., by the provisions of Oxford, the erection of the House of Commons, and the first refusal of parliament to grant supplies, till grievances were redressed. In the



fourteenth, we find Edward II. obliged to grant articles to his parliament, and parliament denying the power of the King to grant a subsidy to the Pope. We see the House of Commons taking its present form by the election of a speaker; and the two estates first threatening to depose Richard II. and afterwards exercising that great function of the people, the deposition of one King and the election of another.—In the 15th we meet with that remarkable exercise of parliamentary authority, the appointment of Protectors during the minority of Henry VI. About the same time loans began to be obtained on parliamentary security,—and the House of Commons rose to its natural level by the purchase of land from the Nobles. The most remarkable extension of liberty in the sixteenth century, was the abolition of papal authority and jurisdiction: but notwithstanding the signal abilities and wisdom of Elizabeth, who reigned for nearly one half of that period, it is notorious that the House of Commons was gaining and exerting strength and independence. This was felt in a variety of instances by her pedantic and pragmatical successor, who was driven to the most dishonourable expedients to raise the supplies, which parliament refused to grant. Barely to mention the principal instances of the power of the people in the seventeenth century, would greatly exceed my limits. Let it suffice to say, that it was distinguished by the origin of our modern factions, which some think so conducive to the preservation of liberty. Whigs and Tories were first known in 1621. The spirit of the people appeared in the Bill of Rights, in the law limiting the duration of parliaments to three years, (1640) in the suppression of the Star-chamber and High Commission Court, the contest about ship money, the prosecution of favourites, the subjection of the clergy to the payment of taxes, and finally, in the war and in the death of the King.—While the same century can boast of many excellent laws obtained by the influence of the people, such as the habeas corpus, the revival of the act for calling triennial parliaments, (1694) which had been repealed under Charles II. the act of toleration and the bill of rights; some of the worst that disgrace our statute book originated from the same cause. Thus, the test act and the act of uniformity,

were the effect of popular prejudice, and were carried in opposition to the court. We may rank them among the proofs of the fallibility, and of the freedom, of the people. It is scarcely necessary to take notice of those well known and glorious efforts of popular prerogative connected with the Revolution—cashiering and electing their governors, and bestowing the crown in succession. Among the more recent improvements of the eighteenth century, it is sufficient to mention the abolition of feudal jurisdiction, (1745) which extinguished the last remains of hereditary aristocratical tyranny; the independence of the Judges established by William III. (13th chap. 2.) and enlarged by his present Majesty, (1st Geo. III. 23)—the abolition of general warrants; and the place and pension bill. As a further instance of the progress of the constitution and of our inattention to that progress, I remind the reader of an act which, though not a year old, he has probably forgotten—I mean that law, which ascertained and established two constitutional points of the greatest importance, the right of Juries and the freedom of the Press. The privilege of Jurors to judge of law as well as fact, in case of libels, and consequently the freedom of the Press, are two points that are now become articles of our constitution, and exemplify the manner in which it improves by the perseverance of the people, without revolution, or tumult; not in consequence of a sudden and inconsiderate burst of enthusiasm, but after a deliberate discussion of the subject by the people and parliament. That the right of a Jury to give a verdict upon the whole matter in issue was not established before that act, appears from the necessity of the act itself: and that the freedom of the press was not expressly ascertained by the constitution, is evident from this, that some years ago, no printer dared to report to the people the debates of their Representatives, unless under fictitious names.

IN extending this observation to Ireland, I might assert, that as privileges were gained by the English, they were gradually extended to that part of this kingdom which was subject to the King. Thus Henry II. granted to his Irish subjects Magna Charta, Charta de Forcibus, the Modus te-

nendi Parliamenta, and the common law of England. Thus in the earliest times we obtained the appointment of Magistrates, and Judges of Assize. Thus were those ancient and salutary laws enacted which secured the people against military and Aristocratical tyranny, and more recently the Habeas Corpus Act, and the independence of the Judges; and thus was the freedom of trade first conferred, and by the liberal explanation of the Navigation Act in the last Session of the British Parliament further extended, by permitting us to supply the markets of Britain with the produce of her own Colonies. I might maintain that in addition to these foreign Auxiliaries we may boast of many securities to liberty, natives of our own soil—the Octennial Bill—the repeal of the Penal Laws—the Emancipation of our Legislature—the restoration of the final judicature—the Irish Libel Bill, and the late act against excessive bail; and I might prove, that for forty years past, few have elapsed without some signal confirmation of freedom. But for the instances, I must refer to the subsequent numbers, and the recollection of those who have inquired into the History of their Country.—I might appeal to the personal recollection of every man who has paid any attention to what has passed before his eyes since 1778.—But men are so much engrossed by the transactions of the day, that few of them are able and fewer willing, to ascend an eminence and take a comprehensive view of even so short a space. If, however, any man were to extricate himself from the bustle and prejudice of local and temporary politics, and calmly survey that portion of time in which he has been an observer of mankind, he would readily perceive, that this country has improved both in prosperity and liberty. With regard to prosperity, some consider it as a presumptive proof of good Government; while others contend, that we are prosperous in spite of a wretched Constitution and contemptible Governors. Without dwelling on this point which does not admit of demonstration, and on which every man will therefore think as he likes—I shall confine myself to liberty; for here I am in no danger of contradiction, the facts being numerous, striking and notorious.

NOR do I hold out *this* country as an exception to the general state of THE WORLD, as if liberty were flourishing here, while she was expiring in every other part of Europe. Were I to do so, I might justly be suspected of partiality. I consider Ireland as only one instance of an undeniable fact—that the human race, considered as one great community, is progressive in knowledge, liberality, prosperity and liberty. Nay, I do not hesitate to say, that they have made greater advances in these important interests within the last thirty years, than in any former period of equal length. If therefore, my contending that Ireland was an exception to the general condition of mankind would have been a presumption of partiality, may I not suspect him of some undue bias, who maintains that its condition is an exception to the general improvement of the world?

BUT many who will readily admit that the condition of their country has been meliorated in every other period of its History, will except the present era; and few of our more active patriots can patiently hear it asserted, that at this day the kingdom is making advances in liberty. Yet even this I think probable from reason, and certain from fact. I will even restrict my assertion to that point of time in which liberty has received the severest wounds. and maintain, that on striking the balance of the last Session, the result will be found favourable to freedom. From the concluding numbers, every man will be able to judge for himself. Without anticipating what will there be stated, I shall only submit some observations, which I wish him to keep in mind.

The first is, that if the Constitution has received damage it is to be ascribed rather to the folly and precipitation of an infatuated faction, than to the power of Administration, however well inclined to encroach upon it. While it was vilifying by faction, and undermining by men in power, the enlightened friends of their country lamented in silence and inaction, their follies and their crimes.

THIS is intimately connected with the second truth, that even the most censurable acts of the last session were passed

with the approbation or acquiescence of the most strenuous friends of the people in Parliament; of a great majority of men of property, education, and abilities, out of doors; and even of a large proportion of the subjects in inferior ranks. Much as these acts are condemned *now*, not a single petition appeared against them at the time. Whether this consent was obtained by the artifice of the castle in deluding the nation, or by the desperate folly of a party who terrified their countrymen, it is plain that what was effected with the concurrence of so great a portion of the community cannot be strong evidence of the decay of the Constitution. I rather conclude, that every thing we gained is to be attributed to the influence of the people and the vigour of that Constitution; while every thing we have lost was given up in a panic, in order to secure the peaceable enjoyment of the remainder. At least this seemed to be the general impression. If the people were deceived, there is no form of government under which they are less exposed to deception; and whether deceived or not, the general consent of the wealth, information, and talents of the country, would even under a well ordered government be taken for the sense of the people. The Gun-powder and Convention Bills, the augmentation of the army, and the extension of the privileges of the Lords, were like the appointment of a Dictator. But it should be remembered, that the power of the Roman Dictator continued but six months, and that it was generally resigned before that period. If Government have not moderation to give up the dictatorial authority with which they are invested as soon as the danger is past, I have no doubt, that their dictators will be dismissed, and their fasces broken, by the constitutional efforts of the nation.

In the third place, as we uniformly find both from history and the experience of our own times, that every good and necessary plan, when long persisted in by the people, has been carried; so every unconstitutional innovation has either become obsolete or been expressly abolished: and while the Place and Pension Acts, the reduction and limitation of the pension List, and the act declaratory of the Rights of Juries, will be enrolled among our indefeasible privileges, the ob-



noxious measures of that session will be classed with the ancient claims of Britain to make laws and administer justice for Ireland. Through the vigilance of the people, those acts which are not sanctioned by the constitution, may be removed in time; while the abrogation of the good ones which accompanied them as *palliatives*, can with an ill grace be repealed by the most abandoned government.

LASTLY, waving these considerations, I might put the question upon the simple issue of a fair balance struck between the measures even of that unpopular session. I might state the acts first enumerated—against the Secret Committee, the Gun-powder Act, and the Delegation Act.

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### THOUGHTS

#### ON THE BRITISH CONSTITUTION.

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No. XVIII.

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DANS l'Aristocratie, la Souveraine Puissance est entre les mains d'un certain nombre de personnes. Ce sont elles qui font les Loix & qui les font executer, & le reste du peuple n'est tout au-plus á leur égard, que comme dans une Monarchie les sujets sont á l'égard du Monarque.

L'esprit des Loix.

" In an Aristocracy the Supreme Power is in the hands of a  
 " certain number of individuals, who make and execute  
 " their laws. The rest of the people are their subjects."

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THE aristocratical governments of some continental Republics, are justly reprobated. The privileges of the Nobles in France were so highly oppressive, as in a great measure to cause and justify the Revolution. In the course of the struggle, the term "Aristocrate" has been applied to every friend of order and subordination, who has opposed the anarchical extravagancies of the most contemptible de-

magogues : and unhappily this style of speaking has been introduced into this country to corrupt both our language and our principles. Every man that differs from certain popular writers, is denominated an aristocrate ; and I have no doubt, that some expressions in the preceding essay will procure me the honour of the same appellation. In vindication therefore of the constitution and myself, I deny that there is any *establishment* in this country which deserves the title of aristocracy, in an invidious sense. A government entirely exercised by Nobles, is justly reprobated as the worst of all tyrannies ; and even where the administration of a kingly government is exclusively conducted by them, they add to the oppressive nature of absolute power, and defeat the intentions of a limited monarchy : nay if they form a cast, so that their cabals cannot be disconcerted, or their pride checked by the admission of commoners into their number, I freely confess, that such an order is a diseased and deformed member of the political body. But such an order does not exist in Great Britain or Ireland. The Lords are neither the rulers nor ministers of the country : they can neither make nor execute laws of themselves : their families and relations are commoners : and they are continually obliged to receive persons even of mean origin, but splendid abilities, knowledge, or merit, into their house.

TAKE a view of the actual distribution of power in these countries. In England the most efficient offices of the state are necessarily held by members of the House of Commons : the highest posts in the law are always held by commoners or newly created peers : and the dignities of the church are generally in the hands of men of low birth ; their honours dying with them, whatever attachment they feel to the crown, they are slenderly connected with the coronet. The great officers in the army and navy are, with few exceptions, of the same description. But the most striking proof of this point is a fact which is within the knowledge of all my readers. Cast your eye over the distribution of power in *this* kingdom. It is entirely in the hands of men of humble origin, excepting the viceroy. Who are the men that administer the affairs of this country ? Are

the Lord High Chancellor, the Lord Primate, and the Archbishops men of noble birth? No. Yet these men take precedence of all the nobility. The Secretary of State, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Attorney and Solicitor General, in short all the men who transact the business of government in the House of Commons, are necessarily commoners. If any of the judges are ennobled, it is only in consequence of their promotion, that they may assist in the deliberations of the supreme court of judicature. Who are the men, that are rapidly advancing to these situations? Many of them persons of no patrimony or pedigree. There is a family of commoners in this kingdom which eclipses the majority of the lords, as much in wealth and influence, as in princely munificence. I speak it to their praise when I say, that they are men of low origin, of no pedigree in *this* country, and even now engaged in commercial business. I speak it to the praise of the constitution, when I add, that were it not invidious, I could shew that all the exalted personages above mentioned are *novi homines*, men that in the best days of the Roman Republic would not have been suffered to aspire to the lowest offices of the state, or to a seat in the senate. The whole power of the monarch, in both countries, is always wielded and sometimes controlled by men on a level as to title or privilege, with the meanest of the people. There is no obstacle to any man of talents. The administration of the empire is within his grasp.

I CAN never consent to call that an aristocratical government, in which private gentlemen like C. J. Fox, the present minister, and his illustrious father, direct the whole machine of the state, and influence or even dictate the politics of Europe; and in which I see Dukes, Marquesses and Earls, performing menial offices about the person, household, or stable of the King. Nor can I, on the other hand, suspect that this reverse of condition proceeds from the despotism of the Monarch; since in the course of my life, every change in the King's councils has been dictated by the people, often in opposition to the wishes of his Majesty.

There are some people, though, it is to be hoped, few in this country, that consider *the rich* as an aristocracy; that

hold in suspicion every man who has a whole suit of clothes ; that think every independent man an enemy of liberty ; every opulent man a tyrant ; and who by branding all kind of subordination with the name of slavery, all influence with that of tyranny, would treat men of property and authority as Tarquin treated the poppies in his garden. But the result of such crude extravagancies will always be the effect which that tyrant thus depicted. When a state abounds with persons of influence and wealth, it will not be easy even for a King to usurp absolute power. When all are equal, the first man or party that can rise above the level by wealth, or eloquence, or courage, or cunning, or any other means, becomes the lord of all.

WITH these atrocious follies I must be excused from arguing.

WHILE I thus deny the existence of any *privileged order*, which deserves the name of ARISTOCRACY in the invidious sense of that word, I am far from wishing to defend our numerous corrupt and depopulated boroughs, or that unconstitutional influence which men of property often exert at elections. These have already been the subject of pointed reprobation in former numbers of this publication. But these are only defects in the democratical part of the constitution ; for this influence is neither confined to the nobles, nor is it necessarily hereditary. It may be possessed by any man who can acquire property, and is subject to fluctuation and transfer ; being at one time connected with a title of nobility ; presently, attached to the landed estate of a commoner ; and soon after in the hands of an opulent merchant.

MANY schemes have been devised for correcting the inequality and the influence of property : but all that I have seen are pregnant with greater evils than they pretend to extirpate, and threaten to rob men of dearer privileges than they affect to secure. To those who adopt these notions, every superior is an aristocrate, and men can never be free, while they have any rights remaining ; for an inequality

property must necessarily subsist, till men shall be deprived of the privileges which they hold most dear, such as disposing of their fortunes and governing their families. A late paradoxical and visionary tract on political justice (Godwin's *Political Justice*, Vol. ii. p. 381—384. Dublin Edition.) has carried the notions which have been controverted in these papers, to such a ludicrous excess, that one might well suspect it to be a piece of refined satire, conducted with the gravest irony. The author having laid it down as a maxim, that men have no rights, proceeds to recommend a state of society, if it can be so called, in which they will be subject to no government. This he calls a system of 'individuality.' Lest any two persons should unite, he abolishes marriage, and establishes in its room a promiscuous intercourse of the sexes; and lest this should produce too powerful an effect, he speaks of a subsequent period at which ALL intercourse between them is to be renounced; and men are by virtue of his plan to become IMMORTAL upon earth, (Godwin, Vol. ii. p. 393.)—But what connects these remarks with our present subject is his whimsical idea of aristocracy. For any man to have a wife, he pronounces to be a violation of equality; to wish to know his own children is an unpardonable instance of family pride; and it would be quite inconsistent with the system of 'individuality' to assume that insolent and oppressive mark of distinction, a surname. By reprobating every form of government that has ever been attempted or devised, and holding out this as the only alternative, he contrives to leave his readers in very good humour with their present lot, and ready to exclaim—

—Rather bear those ills we have,  
Than fly to others that we know not of.

SHALL we then, with the presumption of a modern theorist, consider our constitution as perfect; or like a satellite of despotism, maintain that this is a time at which reformation should be postponed? A patriot of the old stamp will rather say—the constitution has received improvement in every situation of affairs, in peace and in war, by its native vigour, and by the exertions of the people. It is always progressive, or retrograde; never at rest: seeming to decline



for a time, but often, like Anteus, deriving strength from its falls; and, like the Hydra, life from its wounds. Let the people retain their jealousy and their constancy; their jealousy will protect it from violation, their constancy will guard them against the meretricious arts of a more youthful mistress; but let them not be deluded by pretences, that ANY TIME is unfit for a reform upon constitutional principles.

NOTHING has been farther from my intention in the course of these papers, than to present a picture of our government under false or flattering colours. To give a just one, and to vindicate the many excellent qualities of the original, was my single aim. Whether it deserves the character I have drawn, may be tried by the following axiom—that THERE IS NOT A REAL GRIEVANCE OF WHICH THE PEOPLE COMPLAIN WHICH THAT VERY CONSTITUTION, IF IN FULL OPERATION, WOULD NOT REMOVE. To establish this position, there is little more to be done than refer to the seventh number of these THOUGHTS, where some of its fundamental principles are enumerated, and their legal foundations pointed out. By that touchstone let the most obnoxious acts of any session be tried, and if their principles be not there disclaimed, every portion of my defence may fall to the ground.

Is it our complaint, that juries may be unfairly impanelled?—By ancient usage the sheriffs were elective.

Do special juries intrench upon the liberty of the subject?—They are novelties of a modern date.

CAN the subject be fined or imprisoned to any amount and for an indefinite term, without trial by his peers, without being confronted with his accuser?—Magna charta expressly opposes it.

A moment's recollection will convince us that every unconstitutional point which is brought to this test, will meet the fate of those adduced. If then the PRINCIPLES of British freedom come from this ordeal with untainted honor, and every deviation in PRACTICE can be traced back to the people who have suffered it—who is to blame—the constitution,

or themselves? If ever there was a form of government calculated to administer itself for ages, and to preserve an undiminished lustre without the intervention and jealous care of the collective body, let the British one stand accountable for every blemish. But if none such ever did exist, our system of civil policy is as little chargeable with its present abuses, as any other of which either the ancient or modern world furnishes examples.

THE constitution is a goodly fabric, the foundations of which are still solid and entire. Some of its buttresses have been suffered through the negligence of the owners, to fall into decay. These have only to be repaired, that it may answer every purpose of its erection. If I am asked, how is this to be effected?—by union, and a determined spirit among the people.

WERE we not divided among ourselves, and too apt to wander from the object, a reform might experience a temporary resistance, but the struggle would peaceably terminate in success. However problematical it may appear, a deranged republic would have greater difficulties to encounter, in a restoration to its primitive principles, than that form of government which is admired in proportion as it is minutely examined, and is most censured where least understood.

NOTHING in this world is stationary, but all subject to change. Those institutions, therefore, which make allowance for the progressive declension of states from the highest eminence of virtue, are best calculated for imperfect beings. An author who has been a standard with former generations, and whose works will survive the wrecks of modern politics, informs us in the motto of the second number—that—

“To produce *great political good*, less virtue is required in A MONARCHY, than in any other form of Government.

MONTESQUIEU.

THOUGHTS  
ON THE BRITISH CONSTITUTION.

---

No. XIX.

---

NOVEMBER 7.

" IT will be found, if I mistake not, a true observation in  
" Politics, that the two extremes in Government, *liberty*  
" *and slavery*, commonly approach nearest to each other;  
" and that, as you depart from the extremes, and mix  
" a little of monarchy with liberty, the Government be-  
" comes always the more free."

HUME.

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THE following is offered as a brief and imperfect sketch of  
some of the most remarkable parts in the History of the  
Constitution of Ireland.

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ANNO 1494. From the 10th of Henry VII. a parliament  
could not be summoned in Ireland, till the articles proposed  
to be passed in it were previously certified to the King, and  
after his Majesty in his English Council had *considered* and  
*approved*, or *altered* said act intended to be passed, then and  
not sooner could a parliament be holden; but no other acts  
than those so certified could be introduced.

[From the 3d and 4th of William and Mary, it was allowed  
that *new causes* might be certified, after the session had actu-  
ally commenced.]

FROM the enacting of Poyning's law, 10th Henry VII. all  
statutes that had passed in England were to be of force in  
Ireland, and subsequent ones, in which Ireland was included,  
were considered as in force there.

[THIS was necessarily extended in 1782 (by Mr. Yelverton's bill) to subsequent acts; for the quiet and settlement of possessions held in Ireland, under no other titles.]

IT was the usage of parliament until of very late years, that Irish laws were brought in as *heads of bills*, and presented to the Lord Lieutenant for the time being, who might, or might not, as he and the council thought proper, transmit them for the King's consideration.

OF course between the privy councils of the two kingdoms, parliament was rendered a nullity, and their deliberations a name.

ANNO 1698. 'Molyneux's case of Ireland being bound by acts of parliament in England,' was burned by the hands of the common hangman of London, after the house of commons of Great Britain had voted that unanswerable book, (the principles of which are now the law of our land) to be "of dangerous consequence to the crown and people of Ireland," and addressed the King on its pernicious tendencies.

THE King could assure his Commons in one of the countries which he governed (England), that his Majesty would do all that in him lay to discourage the *woollen* trade in his other kingdom (Ireland). A compromise, however, was graciously made that the *linen* trade should be left entirely to us. And such was the baneful influence of a British court at that day, that while an Irish parliament passed an act laying heavy duties on the exports of woollens of its own country to *England*, the English parliament in the succeeding year even prohibited Irish export to *other countries*; so that between the parliament of the one country and the other, the manufacture bade fair for total annihilation.

ANNO 1719 In an appeal from the Irish court of exchequer to the Irish Lords, the decree of exchequer was reversed. The person whose property was affected by the reversal, made an appeal from his own country to the *British Lords*, who acting on the principle that an *Irish* House of Lords

possessed no judicial powers, confirmed the first decree, in opposition to the reversal by the Irish Lords; and the Barons of the exchequer of Ireland were actually obliged to restore possession of the estates in litigation, according to the English reversal.

ON the other hand, the lady who was injured by the reversal of the Irish Lords decree, petitioned their house; in consequence of which the Barons of the Irish exchequer were taken into custody for acting under *an order of the British House*; and a representation of the case was forthwith transmitted to the King. This representation being laid by him before his British Lords, they beseeched his Majesty to confer some act of Royal favour on the Barons of the Irish exchequer for their conduct on the occasion, and framed a bill which passed into a law, denying all right in the Lords of Ireland to exercise any judicial power, to judge of, affirm, or reverse, any judgment, or decree, given even in any of the courts of their own country; assuming that, as an exclusive privilege of their own, which was denied to *our* Lords, in affairs merely affecting ourselves.

ANNO 1720. 6 Geo. I. The right of Great Britain to bind Ireland by acts of her legislature, having been called in question,—the British Parliament passed an act declaratory of what was the law of England on that point, viz. That “the kingdom of Ireland *ought to be subordinate to and dependent* upon the imperial crown of Great Britain, as being “inseparably annexed and united thereto; and that the “King’s Majesty, with the consent of the Lords and Commons of Great Britain in parliament assembled, hath “power to make laws for Ireland.”

AT this time Roman Catholics could hold leases only for 31 years; our trade was intolerably shackled; and our Parliaments were unlimited in their duration, unless the King pleased to dissolve them, or they suffered dissolution by his death.

It is now time to look at the reverse of the picture, which will convince any man that every thing may be obtained by



*perseverance*; as the difficulties which our ancestors had to cope with, sunk under their steady unremitting endeavours.

ANNO 1723. Woods half pence. Dean Swift, seized that occasion slyly to raise a spirit of enquiry into the rights of Ireland as an independent kingdom. The English government taking advantage of a scarcity of copper coin in this country, granted a patent to Mr. Woods for fourteen years, to be an exclusive coiner of half pence and farthings for Ireland, to the amount of 108,000*l*. His coin was base, and the whole a gross imposition; but the spirit of the country under its great leader prevailed. One of the first acts of Lord Carteret, as Lord Lieutenant, was a proclamation offering 300*l*. reward for discovering the author of the *Draper's fourth Letter*, in which Irish rights were proclaimed by the Dean, under that fictitious title.

ANNO 1753.—Previous consent. A contest with the crown, whether a surplus of revenue then remaining in the Irish treasury, after all the public burthens had been discharged, was at the disposal of parliament for public purposes; or at the will of the crown, to be taken out of the treasury by a King's letter. The question at first was, whether royal consent was necessary. before parliament could apply this unappropriated sum toward the discharge of the national debt. Parliament denied that it was:—but his Majesty, after a considerable time, settled the point, by taking it out of the treasury by his own letter. The crown triumphed; but the people were taught to think; to enquire into their rights; and to combine their force by means of popular clubs, in order to assert and recover them.

EVEN subsequent to this period. such a veil was drawn between the collective body and their representatives, that the PRESS, now a dreaded engine of popular power, dare not publish debates without exhibiting the speakers, whether courtiers or patriots, under fictitious names;—ransacking the annals of Greece and Rome for names to cover those really intended.

Anno 1764.—GENERAL WARRANTS had been in practice even from the Revolution, without having ever been called in question; till the committal of John Wilkes to the Tower, as the author of Number forty-five of the North Briton, brought the legality of them into question, and ended in their virtual abolition in England, and of course in Ireland, to the great improvement of the constitution. Of this, a slight enquiry into their nature will afford sufficient proof. These warrants had been issued by Secretaries of State; and they were termed *general*, because it was not necessary that they should even contain the names of the particular persons charged with the offence. They went to authorize any number of men, however mean and contemptible, to apprehend and seize the reputed authors, printers, and publishers of any writing which Secretaries of State chose to deem seditious. The most innocent man might be dragged from his bed, and hurried to a prison; his papers rummaged, and those of the utmost value to himself or his family, though the public were no way concerned in them, might be concealed, or destroyed; and secrets of the utmost delicacy and of the most private nature, revealed. Thus a highly dangerous discretionary power was exercised over the liberty of the subject, not by magistrates only, but by the most profligate of mankind, the inferior officers of justice; and all this in the mere case of a *supposed libel*, before proof was brought to a jury that it was any libel, or that the accused was author, printer, or publisher of the paper in question. How this power might have been and was abused, by an improper minister, and how indefensible it was on every principle of the constitution, it is unnecessary to point out.

Anno 1768. A bill was carried for limiting the duration of Irish parliaments to seven years, as in England; it was returned, altered to *eight* years in the British Privy Council; and so altered, it passed and continues in force.

Anno 1778. The increased spirit of the nation produced the Volunteer Association, the admirable effects of which need not here be enumerated.

Roman Catholics in Ireland were empowered by law to take leases for any term of years not exceeding 999, or for any term determinable on any number of lives not exceeding five; in place of thirty-one years, which was the longest term they could enjoy before that time.

ANNO 1779. The increased influence of the people on the conduct of parliament, produced a *six-months money bill*, as means of extorting a free trade from Great Britain. In the December of that year, the Minister carried a repeal of the British law which had prohibited the exportation of Irish manufactures made of, or mixed with wool, from any part of Ireland; also the repeal of a law prohibiting the exportation of glass into Ireland that was not of British manufacture, and prohibiting the exportation of it from this country to others.

IRELAND was at the same time permitted to export and import commodities to and from the British Colonies in America, and the West Indies, and the British settlements on the coast of Africa.

ANNO 1780. Mr. Grattan in the Irish House of Commons moved, that "no power on earth, save the King, Lords and Commons of Ireland, have a right to make laws to bind this country."—*Motion lost!*

PARLIAMENT having passed a limited mutiny bill, for legalizing the existence of an army from session to session, it was returned from England with an unconstitutional alteration rendering it *perpetual*.

A modification of Poyning's law was rejected, and a bill for establishing the independence of the judges met the same fate.

ANNO 1781. THE same salutary bills were again brought forward, and treated with similar contempt.

Notwithstanding this, in the very year following,

ANNO 1782. THE *declaratory law* of England, 6 Geo. I. asserting a right to legislate for this country, which

had long and deservedly been so obnoxious to us ; was repealed by the British parliament. And now the influence of the people of Ireland *out of* parliament was strongly marked ; for, after the whole point of legislation seemed to be settled between the two countries, respecting the dereliction of the British claim to make laws for Ireland, and of her Lords to act as a court of dernier appeal, new discontents arose among us, to which England had to submit by a law of the 26th of his present Majesty, expressly renouncing the pretended right, in the following terms. “ The said right claimed by the people of Ireland, to be bound only by laws enacted by his Majesty and the parliament of that kingdom, in *all cases whatsoever*, and to have all actions and suits at law or in equity, which may be instituted in that kingdom, decided in his Majesty’s courts therein, finally and without appeal from thence, shall be and it is hereby declared to be established and ascertained for ever, and shall at no time hereafter be questioned or questionable.”

ALL the injurious restrictions of the law of Poyning’s, that had for two hundred and eighty-eight years sapped the vital principle of debate, and of a free parliament, were done away.

A Mutiny Bill for legalizing the existence of the army, limiting its duration to two years, and subjecting it to the controul of our own parliament instead of the British one, was carried into a law. On a former occasion when an Irish act had passed, taking some trifling cognizance of the army on our establishment, the late Lord Chatham taxed the English Minister with having thus “ suffered the strongest quill to be plucked from the eagle’s wing.”

A Habeas Corpus law was also passed, which Ireland never before enjoyed, though England had.

ROMAN Catholics were enabled to purchase or possess lands by grant, limitation, descent or devise ; to dispose of them by will descendable according to the course of common law, devisable and transferable as the lands of Protestants.

SEVERAL penal acts were repealed, viz. those against the hearing and celebrating of mas; ; against a Roman Catholic having a horse of or above the value of five pounds; as well as those which empowered grand juries to levy from them the amount of any losses sustained by privateers, required them to provide watchmen, and totally excluded them as inhabitants of the city of Limerick or its suburbs. They were no longer prohibited from keeping schools *publicly*, or teaching persons of their own profession *privately*; and the guardianship of their children was restored to the parents.

By ancient usage the judges held their offices during the King's pleasure, and lost them at his death, in order that his successor might have the nomination of his own judges. The bad effects of this corrupt connexion between the crown and the bench were often written in letters of blood. By an English statute of William III. their commissions were made to continue during their own *good behaviour*, instead of the *King's pleasure*, and their salaries fixed; at the same time that they were removable by the King on the joint address of both houses of parliament.

His present Majesty, among other salutary improvements, opened his reign with recommending that it should be enacted (which it accordingly was) that even the demise of the King should not put an end to the commission of the Judges; but that they should continue without intermission as if no such event had taken place, and continue to have the salaries allowed them by law. This excellent improvement on the constitution, which was enjoyed by our sister country from the accession of his Majesty George III. was not granted to Ireland for twenty-two years afterwards, to wit, till a few months after the first Dungannon meeting had pointed out, in a very spirited resolution, the necessity for the judges being rendered as independent in this kingdom as in Great Britain.

ANNO 1785. A place and pension bill, proposed by Mr. Forbes, was rejected.



GREAT Britain tried her strength as far as prudence would permit, in favour of a certain commercial adjustment with Ireland, in which some obnoxious clauses were introduced. The minister carried it by a majority of nineteen in our House of Commons (127 to 108); but was obliged to withdraw the bill, because the sense of *the people was against it*.

ANNO 1788. A bill brought in to reduce the interest of money in Ireland from six to five per cent. as in England, it passed the Commons, but was thrown out in the Lords. [An instance of the use of two deliberative houses.]

ANNO 1789. The printer of a newspaper in Dublin had published certain libels on some obscure characters. The Chief Justice, at the instance and on the affidavits of the aggrieved, issued his FIATS, to hold the printer to special bail in the sum of seven thousand eight hundred pounds.—The action being a common one of slander, and the damages accruing to the complainants uncertain, it was alleged that holding the printer to special bail at all, was inadmissible and only allowable in actions of scandalum magnatum, or of slander of title. The printer was however thrown into jail. His council shortly after moved to dismiss him on common bail, or no bail at all, which he proved to be consistent with law, and conformable to the uniform practice of the British courts; tho' it was to be confessed that there were many instances in Ireland in favour of the judge. Over ruled by the court in that point, the lawyer shewed from the uncertain nature of the injuries incurred, and the low situations of the parties aggrieved, that the bail demanded was excessive, and should be diminished. The affidavit of the printer was likewise produced, stating that "in consequence of frequent and vexatious arrests, by fiats and otherwise, and by libellous publications," he was so injured in his credit as to be unable to find bail for more than five hundred pounds. The motion was refused, and the person accused remanded to Newgate. This transaction occasioned great agitations. Cases were imagined in which a patriot might fall under the displeasure of a corrupt administration, and by means of an affidavit sworn against him by any unprincipled wretch, stat-

ing damages to such an amount as he could not find bail for, fiats might issue at the discretion of a judge; he might be thrown into a jail, and there remain three terms before he could enter a *non-pros*. Being at that period discharged, he has no remedy for his loss of liberty, but in following the plaintiff. The plaintiff is a man of straw, and has fled. This case brought itself home to the feelings of every one, and we deemed ourselves undone. Mark the consequence. As the oppression of an individual gave birth to the *Habeas Corpus* act of 31 Carolus II. so the printer, in the case now mentioned, suffered grievously, but the very severity of his case, produced an excellent law, which passed in the 31st of his present Majesty. To prevent vexatious arrests and proceedings in actions of slander, the writ or process, can no longer be marked for a greater sum than *two hundred pounds*, in any case in which *actual* damages are not set forth and sworn to; and no defendant in such action can be held to *SPECIAL* bail in a greater sum than two hundred pounds, except where actual damages are set forth and sworn to by plaintiff; and where actual damages are so sworn to, the court or judge may at discretion admit defendant to bail, in a lesser sum than the amount of the damages sworn to.

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THOUGHTS  
ON THE BRITISH CONSTITUTION.

No. XX.

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NOVEMBER 7, 1793.

“ THIS is a season of virtue, and public spirit. Let us  
“ take advantage of it to repeal those laws which infringe our  
“ liberties, and introduce such as may restore the vigour of  
“ our ancient constitution.”

SIR JOHN ST. AUBIN.

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(SUBJECT OF THE LAST NUMBER RESUMED AND CONCLUDED.)

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ANNO 1793. The session of this year opened with an admission of the principle, that A REFORM IN THE REPRESENTATION demanded the serious attention of the Legislature.

On the fourteenth of January, the servants of the crown and the commons at large, consented that that grand desideratum should be investigated in a committee of the whole house, on the 12th of the following month. As it is seldom considered the interest of assemblies to abridge their own power, or hold out any hope of it to the people, nothing but popular influence, through whatever channels, or upon whatever passions it operated, could have produced this effect. The twelfth of February arrived. Mr. Grattan's preparatory motions were lost by the question of adjournment, and the subject was not resumed during the session. Had the kingdom come forward before that decision, success seemed inevitable; but it remained silent, because intimidated; and at the very moment when a reform seemed attainable, it fell to the ground. If the favourable reception which it met with be attributed to the violence of a party, in the first instance; the intimidation of the people at large was the result of that violence, in the second; and the loss of the cause, in the third.

SUCH are the natural consequences of threats without power; of advancing extravagant lengths, when the people neither follow nor approve; of slighting the constitution, and treating it as a non-entity, at the very crisis when an adherence to its principles is wise as well as politic, because it affords the best prospect of union and success.

THE necessity of a reform, as forcibly stated by Mr. Grattan, deserves to be recorded. He asserted, and no man denied, that of the three hundred members of which our representative house consists, two hundred are returned by individuals, instead of bodies of electors. From forty to fifty are returned by ten persons. Of the three hundred; the counties, counties of cities and towns, and university, return eighty-four, leaving two hundred and sixteen for the boroughs and manors. Several of those boroughs have no resident elector at all, some of them but one; and on the whole, two thirds of the representatives are returned by less than one hundred persons. The defence of such a state of things, on the plea of ANTIQUITY, he deemed absurd. So far

From its being derived from antient times, from the Saxons, the age of the Confessor, or after the English intercourse with Ireland, at the time of King John, or the reign of Edward; James the First! was the King who made forty boroughs to return eighty members. In 1613, the numbers returned to parliament were two hundred and thirty-two. Since that time sixty-eight members have been added, ALL by the house of STUART; one by Anne, four by James the Second, most of the remainder by Charles the First, with a view to religious distinctions, and by Charles the Second, with a view to personal favour. The form of the constitution was twelve COUNTIES, established in the reign of King John. Henry the Eighth added one; Mary two; and Elizabeth seventeen. Since that æra the counties have received no additions whatever; though between the year 1613 and the present, the borough interest has received an addition of sixty-eight members, which is more than the whole of the county representation. He estimated the property of each of the one hundred individuals, or constituents, who return two hundred members, at four thousand pounds per annum, on an average; of course all the property they represented did not exceed 400,000l.—though, says he, they vote through their representatives, near two millions in taxes. In other words, there are two thirds of the house, voting near two millions of money every year, and not representing half a million. In this forcible point of view he placed our present establishment with respect to the representation of PROPERTY. His other arguments were equally unanswerable.

IN England for many years, Officers of the Revenue have been disqualified from *voting* at elections. The acceptance of any office created *before* 1705 vacates the seat of the member, and sends him back to his constituents for re-election or otherwise. The acceptance of an office created there *since* 1705, vacates the seat and renders the possessor totally ineligible.

PLACE AND PENSION BILL —In Ireland, by an act of last session (33d year of his present Majesty, no person can

hereafter be elected a member of parliament, who shall hold a new place of profit, created after that act, nor any one who holds a pension for years, or during pleasure, or whose wife shall hold one. Neither can surveyors general, nor collectors of revenue, whether customs or excise, (except in Dublin) nor secretaries to the commissioners of customs and excise, to the commissioners of accounts, to the commissioners of barracks, to the post office, or to the board of ordnance; nor paymaster of corn bounties coast ways, be hereafter members. Every office revived after five years disuse, or where more than one hundred pounds a year is added to the salary;—or where one hundred pounds a year shall be granted to any office to which no salary is now annexed,—shall be deemed a new office, and consequently disqualify the person who holds it from sitting. If a member of parliament after 31st December 1793, accepts an office of profit; he vacates his seat; but is capable of re-election. The number of commissioners for the execution of any office, is limited to what was usual at or before the first day of the present parliament. Officers in the Army, Militia and Navy, may be elected as heretofore, also persons having or accepting an office for life or during good behaviour. And an oath in future is to be taken by every member, that he does not hold in his own name, or in the name of any person in trust for him, any PENSION, for years or during his Majesty's pleasure, or any OFFICE OR PLACE which is rendered by the act of parliament incompatible with his holding a seat in the house of commons.

'Tho' these provisions fall short of what we should require, no one can deny that they are valuable accessions. They deprive the present and future governments of a power which they formerly exercised, of creating new places to strengthen their interest in parliament; (see note\*) at the same time

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\* The reader will perceive the value of this restriction, when he recollects that from 1769 to 1789, forty new parliamentary places had arisen, fourteen of which had been



that they prevent pensioners for years or during pleasure from ever hereafter becoming members, (see note †) and they cut off a train of Surveyors General, Collectors of the Revenue (of Excise and Customs) Commissioners of Accounts, &c. several of whom now vote in the house. And any member accepting an office of profit (unless he holds it for life or during good behaviour) vacates his seat, but is not disqualified from being again returned if his constituents deem him eligible. (see note §)

In the same session, was passed that admirable bill which had shortly before been introduced by Mr. Fox into the British House of Commons, where it is also law, declaring the right of Juries, in the case of libels. It enables them " to

created in the course of six months of the latter year. In that year, on some great popular question, the minister mustered a majority of one hundred and forty-four—one hundred and four of which were placemen and pensioners! Who, considering these things, can with a safe conscience say a reform is unnecessary?

† In five years prior to 1790, pensions were granted to eleven members of parliament, to the wives of others, and to four or five peers of the realm.

§ In England, with respect to ELECTION, revenue officers cannot vote for members in parliament, by which means a great number of trained veterans in the sale of public trusts, are cut off from the elective body;—an improvement which ought to be made in our own country, and which its patriots should strenuously insist on.—The British bill for disqualifying revenue officers was introduced in the year 1770, but scouted. It was revived by a Mr. Crewe, from whence it has been called Crewe's bill; and after it had been repeatedly presented and as often dismissed, it passed both houses of parliament in 1782, and received the Royal sanction when Charles Fox came into administration.

give verdict on the whole matter in issue ;" of course renders them judges both of law and fact. The reader will recollect the strenuous opposition given to this principle by Lord Mansfield, and Lord Camden's long and consistent support of it ; and he will perceive in its success what hopes may be entertained of any measure founded on reason, and pursued with ardour.

In same session, we had an act for granting a civil list establishment in lieu of the hereditary revenue, which formerly arose from certain duties and taxes. The pensions paid out of that list amounted in 1789 to the enormous sum of 108,280l. In order to reduce it to 80,000l. (the sum formerly proposed by the patriots and rejected) the act declares that from the twenty-fifth March, 1794, the pensions granted in any one year shall not exceed 1,200l. until the list be thereby reduced to 80,000l. And after it is so reduced, no pension can be granted for the use of any one person, of a sum exceeding 1,200l. except to the Royal Family, or on an address of either house of parliament. Secret service money is limited to 5,000l. except for preventing or detecting conspiracies ; and concordatum limited to the same sum, or thirty pounds a year to any one person.

In the same session, an act passed *to encourage the improvement of barren land*, such as barren heath and waste ground. Lands of this description, which have paid no tythes, and which hereafter shall be improved and converted into arable ground or meadow, are henceforth for seven years next after the time of improving the same, to be exempted from the payment of tythes. Such was the dread of touching, or in any manner interfering with whatever concerned the church, that an outcry was formerly raised against every idea of exempting from tythe (when they should be rendered of any value) lands which did not even pay it formerly.

In the same session, the act for the relief of his Majesty's Roman Catholic subjects of Ireland, carries internal evidence that the voice of the people, or of a majority of them, cannot long be raised in vain, though opposed by men the highest in office and in power. Roman Catholics are

restored to the elective franchise ; but they are required previously to election to have taken in the Four Courts, or at the Quarter Sessions, an oath of allegiance, (passed in the thirteenth and fourteenth year of the present reign) and made a declaration upon oath with regard to certain points of faith connected with morals ; such as detesting the principle of its being lawful to murder, destroy, or injure any person under pretence of being a heretic ; doing any thing that is wrong, for the good of the church, or in obedience to any ecclesiastical power whatever ; declaring that it is not an article of the catholic faith that the Pope is infallible ; and that he who makes the declaration does not believe that at the will of a Pope sins can be forgiven ; and that he will defend the arrangement of property in this country as established by the laws now in being ; and he abjures any intention to subvert the present church establishment. They are not allowed to vote at parish vestries, nor to carry arms, unless seized of a freehold estate of 100l. a year, or possessed of a personal estate of 1,000l. or upwards ; nor unless possessing a freehold estate of 10l. yearly value and less than 100l. or a personal estate of 300l. and less than 1000l. having taken the oath of allegiance, and made affidavit in open court of the possession of the property mentioned. They may hold civil and military offices, or places of trust under the King, his heirs and successors ; and may take degrees or professorships, or be fellows of any College to be hereafter founded, provided such College be a Member of the University of Dublin, and not founded exclusively for the education of Roman Catholics, &c. &c. They are not to sit in Parliament, nor to hold any office therein, nor any of the great offices in the State, such as Lord Lieutenant, Lord Chancellor, Judge, &c. &c. nor Postmaster General, Master and Lieutenant of the Ordnance, Commander in Chief of the Forces, Generals on the Staff, and Sheriffs and Sub-Sheriffs, &c. &c. Popish Priests must not celebrate marriage between Protestant and Protestant, nor between a Protestant and a Papist, under forfeiture of 500l. From 1st June 1793, Oaths of allegiance and abjuration only necessary in taking degrees in Trinity College.

BILLS of a very different complexion must now be mentioned, as the production of the same session.

AMONG the first of these is the act "to prevent the election or appointment of unlawful assemblies, under pretence of preparing or presenting public petitions, or other addresses to his Majesty or the parliament." "It enacts that all assemblies, committees, or other bodies of persons elected, or in any other manner constituted or appointed to represent, or assuming or exercising a right or authority to represent the people of this realm, or any number or description of the people of the same, or the people of any province, county, city, town, or other district within the same, under pretence of petitioning for or in any other manner procuring an alteration of matters established by law in Church or State, (save and except the knights, citizens, and burgesses elected to serve in the parliament thereof, and except the houses of convocation duly summoned by the King's writ) ARE UNLAWFUL ASSEMBLIES," and that it is "lawful for any Mayor, Sheriff, Justice of the Peace, or other Peace officer, and they are hereby respectively authorized and required within his and their respective jurisdictions to disperse all such unlawful assemblies, and if resisted to enter into the same, and to apprehend all persons offending in that behalf." Persons giving or publishing notice of the election of such representatives, or attending, voting, or acting therein, by any means, are declared on conviction guilty of a high misdemeanor. It provides that it shall not affect elections made of bodies corporate; nor be construed "in any manner to prevent or impede the undoubted right of his Majesty's subjects of this realm to petition his Majesty, or both houses, or either house of parliament for redress of any public grievance."

THE objections to this law are so many and so obvious, it is conceived in a spirit so contrary to the late practice of both kingdoms and the present one in Great Britain, and so impolitic in itself, that no doubt can be entertained but the sense of the nation will from session to session urge and effect its repeal.

HAS it not been observed that delegated or select bodies, taken out of greater ones, are always more moderate and sometimes more wise than their principals? When an immense concourse assembled, might be ready to run into excesses leading to Revolution itself, a delegated assembly would temper popular fury, for it would consist of persons interested in the public peace, as men of character, fortune, and education. The only other remarks that shall here be made on this law are—That it was not dictated by the genius of the constitution, because every avenue to the throne should be free as the air we breathe; a right guaranteed to us time immemorial—Those grievances which are suffered to vent themselves in unrestrained complaints, and in such forms as the subject prefers, seldom produce insurrection or disorder; while those which are for a time pent up within the public breast, burst out in acts of rash but irresistible violence.

THE Gun-powder bill partakes of the spirit of the former, but as it is in force only till the 1st of January 1794, it is presumed it will not be revived. It ordains, under severe penalties on the importer and master of the vessel, that no person shall import ordnance, guns, pistols, gun-locks, swords, bayonets, pikes, spears, balls, gunpowder, or military accoutrements, without a licence from the Chief Governor of the kingdom or his Secretary, or the commissioners of the revenue, or any two of them, or the Master General, or Lieutenant General, or Board of his Majesty's Ordnance. Neither cannon, arms, gun-locks, balls, or gun-powder can be removed from one part of the kingdom to another, without similar licence, or one from any two of the commissioners of the revenue: any officer of the revenue, any Justice of the peace, or peace officer, may search for and seize all such cannon, arms, gun-powder, &c. removed without such licence, provided always that these restrictions shall not extend to prevent any person from carrying arms for the defence of his person, or for sporting, as by law he might before this act. No person is allowed to keep more than four pounds of powder, nor to keep in his possession any cannon or other ordnance, without licence of the Lord Lieutenant, or his secretary, or any two of the Commissioners of the revenue, and any jus-



rice of peace may seize, or by his warrant cause such to be seized, as are kept without said licence.

No person can keep for, or expose to sale any cannon or other ordnance, guns, bayonets, or gun-powder, &c. without a license from any two of the Commissioners of the revenue, or the Collector of the district. Justices are impowered to enter and search, (or to grant warrants so to do) any house, shop, place, &c. where he suspects that such arms, gun powder, &c. may be deposited without license.

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WHOEVER takes a general retrospect of the historical deduction, contained in this and the preceding number, perceives that the spirit of both the commons and the people, has greatly encreased. Without suffering himself to be depressed by temporary infringements of his rights, he may find solid ground for PERSEVERANCE, as CONSTANCY in the pursuit of rational measures, must ultimately be omnipotent—A mass of evidence proves that the prosperity, power, and influence of Ireland, are in a state of progressive improvement. That they have not during the last eleven years, advanced with tardy step, will be apparent, when we recollect how short a period has elapsed since we had any constitution to treat of; since even the Protestant body could be roused from a state of torpor, to consider the natural claims of the nation. Let us religiously keep within the pale of the constitution, and carry along with us the honesty, spirit, and intelligence of the country, both in and out of parliament. All these we had, in the memorable year EIGHTY-TWO. Then, the virtue of the kingdom in whatever rank it could be found, was wisely collected in a point, and rose superior to controul. These we were in possession of till lately, and if we have lost them for a season, it behoves us to seek for their restoration, as well as in future carefully to avoid whatever led to the effect.

It was remarked by Mr. FLOOD, with his usual acumen, that it is our national character to be prompt in entering on great enterprizes; but easily diverted from our object, and

destitute of that steady patience in the chase, without which it is difficult to acquire any thing. He observed that in these respects we were outdone by our English neighbours, who seldom relinquish measures which they have once taken up with spirit. His observation deserves the attention of Irishmen.

We shall take leave of our subject, in the classical language of JUNIUS; to whose exalted mind, a veneration of the constitution appeared to be perfectly consistent with the purest principles of freedom.

“ No man” (says that elegant and nervous writer) laments more sincerely than I do, the unhappy differences which have arisen among the friends of the people, and divided them from each other. The cause undoubtedly suffers, as well by the diminution of that strength, which union carries with it, as by the separate loss of personal reputation, which every man sustains, when his character and his conduct are frequently held forth in odious or contemptible colours. These differences are only advantageous to the common enemy of the country.—It is time for those who really mean the *cause* and the *people*, who have no view to private advantage, and who have virtue enough to prefer the general good of the community—it is time for such men to interfere.—What remains to be done concerns the collective body of the people. They are now to determine for themselves, whether they will firmly and constitutionally assert their rights or make an humble slavish surrender of them. We owe it to our ancestors to preserve entire those rights, which they have delivered to our care; we owe it to our posterity, not to suffer our dearest inheritance to be destroyed.”



